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FROM  
**R E V E L A T I O N,**  
 NOT FROM  
 R E A S O N OR N A T U R E.  
 W H E R E I N

The Origin and Obligation of Religious Truths are demonstrated: Arguments of Deists, Moralists, &c. proved to have no Foundation in Nature or Reason.

The Inlets of Knowledge,  
 The Law of Nature,

The several Texts of Scripture relating to this Subject,  
 The Works of Creation,  
 The Eternal Fitness and Reason of Things,  
 The Demonstrations of a Supreme Being, &c. are fully considered and explained.

Λόγον δὴ κ' πολὺν κ' καλὸν ἔχει, τότε μὲν ὅτε περὶ Θεῶν ὡς ἀνθρώποις διανοήματα πρότα, ὡς τ' ἐγένοντο, οἷοί τ' ἐγίνοντο, κ' ὅτις μετεχειρίζοντο πράξεις, μὴ κατὰ νοῦν τοῖς σώφροσι λέγεσθαι, μηδ' ἐφίλωσ. — Luculenta sanè & magna ratione innititur, quando primùm homines de Diis cogitare coeperunt, & quod essent, & quomodo, & quibus in rebus versarentur: illas opinioniones non ex Sapientùm quidem mente & sententia primùm ortas.  
*Plato Epinom. p. 988.*

By a GENTLEMAN of *Brazen-Nose College, Oxford;*  
 now of the Diocese of *Chester.*

L O N D O N,

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## E R R A T A.

- Page 78. line 4. for *either* read *their*  
 Page 93. l. 31. for *other* read *our*  
 Page 132. l. 7: after *innate* dele all "  
 Page 141. continue " to the End of the Paragraph  
 Page 191. l. 7. for *their* r. *its*  
 Page 192. l. 30. dele *that*  
 Page 197. l. 17. after *Reason* insert *does it follow*  
 Page 279. l. 20. for *him* r. *them*  
 Page 297. l. 19. after *Privation* insert *and*  
 Page 333. l. 19. after *may not* insert *only*  
 Page 379. l. 10. dele " to the end of the Paragraph  
 Page 382. l. 8. for *Man* r. *Men*  
 Page 387. l. 15. for *renew* r. *renounce*  
 Page 396. l. 22. for *its* r. *his*

## I N T R O -



## INTRODUCTION.

**I**N these latter Ages, two Religions, that of the Heathens, and that of Nature, have been the Subject of Contemplation, in an equal, if not greater Degree than the Christian.

Concerning the former, *Natalis Comes*, Lord *Herbert*, and others endeavoured to explain, and dress it up in a modern Fashion, and exhibit it to the World as a consistent and rational Scheme of Worship: And the Reason why this happy Discovery had not been made sooner, was, it seems, because no one before them *had ever considered more than the Shell of the Fable*; mankind had taken it in the gross for an absurd irrational System, without being able to discern or unfold the sublime and mysterious Doctrines contained in it: For Paganism is like a Diamond out of the Quarry, where inestimable Beauties and Riches are concealed from the ignorant Eye, under a rough and useles exterior Coat. This they undertook to polish, to pare away the Superfluities, and then shew the internal Worth and Excellency of the Gentile Religion, or at least make it appear to be *not altogether so absurd and stupid, as had hitherto been generally imagined.*

Nat. Com.

The first thing to be done, in order to remove the common prejudices conceived against it, and to clear  
away

away the vast heap of Rubbish and Confusion, was to provide a number of Classes, into which the different Materials might be sorted, that whatever could not be justly accounted for under one Head, might bear a tolerable Construction in another; and be called either Mystical, Symbolical, Allegorical, Historical, Poetical, Fabulous, Natural, Civil, Moral, Esoterical, Exoterical, or the Peculiar Placit of the Legislator, Theologist, Poet or Philosopher, as was most agreeable to the Opinion, Humour or Prejudice, or best suited the Turn of the Interpreter and Mythologist; in which they had a Right to use the most unbounded Liberty: Because without such Latitude it would be impossible to remove the Crowd of monstrous and ridiculous Fictions, with which Truth was perplexed; to account for those cruel and horrid, those shameful and impure Rites, that made up so great a Part of their Religion; or to reconcile those Contradictions which so manifestly appear in the Theology of the Ancients.

But after all this Labour in separating and distinguishing, the most notorious Articles in their Faith and Practice were so villainous, extravagant, and superstitious, as not to be reduced under any of the former Heads, and yet without being properly disposed of, must have ruined the whole Design: Therefore for all these, that is, for the Bulk of Religion, they provided a common Storehouse, and called it Priestcraft: For it seems whoever were initiated into that Order, had but one common View, *to impose upon the stupid Credulity of Mankind, who always gave the Characters of most profound Theologists, to such as had most perverted them from the Rules of Right Reason; and the poor wretched Populace had neither Courage nor Will to suspect all this superstition and juggling doings of the Priests*

Ld. Herbert.

*Priests as adulterate, nor to reject them as such.* Nor ought it to seem strange, that the Priests had such an Ascendency over the Minds of others; for in *Egypt*, the most ancient School of Learning and Religion, they were always chosen out of the Nobility, employed in studying the liberal Arts and Sciences, and advanced to the highest Offices and Places of Preferment in the State. The foolish *Athenians* established the same Custom, for the better Government (as they thought) of Religion and the Commonwealth; and *Numa* imprudently fell into the like Error, by making a Law, that none should be elected Priests, but who were above fifty Years of Age, and excelled others in Birth and Virtue. These were the Men, the greatest, the wisest, and the best, who debauched the Minds, and introduced so many Profanations into the pure Religion of the Heathens. Diod. Sic.

To such Shifts will the Defence of a bad Cause carry Men; Priestcraft is made an Answer to every thing, a Charm to untie all those knotty Difficulties, that History and avowed Facts would otherwise perplex them with. And however coarse a Compliment it may be to the rest of Mankind, yet it has been found necessary to maintain, that for 2000 Years together, the Priests imposed on all the Inhabitants of the Earth; that they could make the whole World dance constant Attendance to their Temples and Oracles, at the Expence of numerous, costly, and impertinent Ceremonies; could persuade Nations to leave their Country, and Kings and Princes as well as People, in spite of all the Reluctancies of Nature, to sacrifice their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils, and think it meritorious to do so; and that all the Priests successively were so much the same, so staunch in Blood and Secrecy, that in this vast Tract of Time, none could find in their Hearts to relent or betray the Imposture; this superlative Craft was above the

Reach of Emperors, Statesmen, or the wisest Philosophers, that is, the whole World (except the Priests) was all this time perfectly besotted.

Another great Prejudice against the Orthodoxy of Heathenism, was the Writings of the primitive Christians, Men eminent for Learning and Piety, most of them Pagans by Birth as well as Profession, educated in all their Wisdom, and thoroughly acquainted with their Faith and Practice: And so it happened, these Fathers represented Paganism as an irrational and detestable Heap of Iniquity, what had more of Phrenzy than of Piety in it; they charge the World with the utmost Stupidity and Idolatry, that they neither knew nor worshipped the true God, but such as were no Gods at all, the wickedest and the worst of Men; that they transferred divine Honours from the only Supreme Being, to the Images of dead Carcases, to Natural Things, and the Works of their own Hands; that the Gods of the Nations were Devils, and that there could be no Religion among them, since their very Gods were the Patrons of all Impurity and Impiety: And so intolerably bold were these old Gentlemen, as to challenge their Enemies to publick Disputes on these very Points; to enter their Appeals to the Emperors, Senate, and People; to disperse their Apologies, and triumph in their Victories; yet were never upbraided with representing Heathenism in a false Light, or opposing such Doctrines as the World did not believe and practise.

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To remove this Objection, *The Fathers of the Church are said to be inveterate Enemies to the Heathens, and to have represented the Matter quite otherwise than it is; for they pass by the more certain and orthodox Part of their Religion, (their Piety, Faith, Hope, and Love) in Silence, and from their Superstitions and Rites take an Occasion to utter severe Invektives against them, and represent them after a most*

a most ridiculous Manner, by ingeniously exposing their mad sacred Rites; for what the Priests did as if they were in a Rapture and inspired with a divine Spirit, they represented as the Effects of Lunacy and Distraction: As also, when they bitterly inveighed against them for worshipping deified Men, they imposed on their Readers, and mistook the Sense of the Heathens about the Word God, for that a deified Man signifies no more among the Heathens, than a glorified Saint does among the Christians. That notwithstanding the constant Imputation of their worshipping false Gods, by the Prophets under the Old Testament, or the Apostles and Martyrs under the New, yet this is the unjustest Accusation in the World: For the ancient Religion was Symbolical, and whatever Veneration they offered to the Heaven, Sun, Moon, or Stars, it terminated in the Worship of the Supreme God, and directly tended to the Advancement of his Glory; and in all their holy Rites there was a religious and mystical Sense couched under them, which whoever will accurately examine, and dive into the Scope and Design of them, will easily discover, and without this Interpretation the Heathens would be the most ridiculous and absurd of Mortals: Yet *Dionysius Halicarnass.* says, *This is a Wisdom and Judgment which few are Masters of.* And how does this last Account agree with what the same Authors teach of the Imposture and Villany of Priestcraft, if there be nothing in Paganism but what is wonderful mysterious and divine?

We are also told, that the Falsity of the Accusation proceeded from an original Mistake, in believing that the Heathens maintained a Plurality of Gods, which they did not do (as being repugnant to the Laws of Nature) but acknowledged one only God. In the Contemplation however of this one infinite Being, as they observed his Virtue and Power to be diffused through every thing, so, according to the Variety of Effects, providential

Dispensations, and known Attributes, they gave different Names at several Times and Places to these Virtues; whence it is inferred as an undoubted Truth, that all the Powers of the other Gods, however dispersed through every Element, proceed as so many Streams from the same Fountain, and terminate in one *Jupiter*, which *Jupiter* is no other than the true God; accordingly if they worshipped a Statue, the Act of Religion was not directed to the Statue, but the Hero it represented; if a Hero, not him, but the Star which bore the same Name, or into which he was translated; if the Stars, not them, but the God which presided over them, for otherwise the Idolatry would be inexcusable.

Having thus prepared the Minds of Men for a candid Reception of Paganism, the Mask is taken off, and the Sum of the Enquiry drawn up in a few Conclusions. The first is, that the Heathens agreed with Christians, not only in worshipping the same Supreme God, and common Father, but with the same Piety and Virtue, the same most principal and essential kind of Worship; and the Challenge of *Celsus* is produced, to shew what was in the Christian Religion that tended to the establishing of Virtue, more than what the Heathens had before acknowledged. The Second is, That since the Heathens had by right Reason discovered an universal Religion, with all the proper Means to attain eternal Happiness, it will necessarily follow, that Mankind did not stand in need of any particular Revelation, or Instruction from God, to that great End: For this is the whole Drift of painting Heathenism in those amiable Colours, to shew that no other Assistance is wanting, than what Nature by the Use of Reason has afforded us, to form a pure and perfect Religion, sufficient to all the Ends of Virtue and Happiness. It is true indeed, that Guilt sometimes flies in the Face of these Gentlemen, and they acknowledge it to be impossible *for the Heathens to acquit themselves of the*  
*Suf-*



*Suspicion of Idolatry, or even the Practice of it ; but even in this are they justifiable : For why might not they embrace the Faith, and those Rites they received from their Ancestors, as well as we have done? And they are not to be blamed for approving those things, which had through so long a Tract of time been delivered down to them.* To omit the Blasphemy of such Comparisons and Assertions; how came it to pass that Reason or Nature did not prevent the Ancients from mistaking rank Idolatry for Religion; or through so many Ages could not shew their Posterity the Folly and Impiety of it? Or is it a Law of Nature, that the Worship of false Gods is a proper and acceptable Service to the true One?

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But in the middle of the last Century appeared a far nobler School, which carried on a freer Enquiry into the Law of Nature, than had ever yet been done, and urged it with great Strength against the Scepticism and Infidelity of the Times, by proving the Agreeableness of revealed Religion to the unquestionable Dictates of right Reason; and thereby recommended Christianity with great Advantage, as being a most reasonable Service, and best adapted to all the Inclinations, Hopes, and Wishes of a rational Creature.

Had the Enquiry stopped here, it would have been of the utmost Service to the Cause of Truth and Virtue; but it was gradually carried on to unwarrantable Lengths; the Religion and the Law of Nature were set up as independent of, and even in opposition to Revelation: The Importance of Morality was extolled as superior to the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity; moral Duties were said to have a natural or eternal Obligation, but positive ones to be mere arbitrary Commands, void of all internal Excellency; the Light of Reason was cried up as sufficient to the Discovery of the Will of God, and the whole Duty of Man, to a distinct Knowledge of Good and Evil, *i. e.* every thing that was necessary

necessary for him to do, or not to do, without any supernatural Assistance. These Studies happened to suit with the Genius, and took up the Attention of the Age, and since then have been the principal Subjects of Contemplation to our Universities, Philosophers and Divines: The Press abounded with Treatises of Natural Divinity, Light of Nature, Law of Nature, Natural Religion, Rational Theology, Christian Theology compared with Platonism: So also, of Moral Theology, Moral Philosophy, Christian Moral Philosophy, Christian Ethicks, and of all the Duties which Men might know, and should be obliged to practise, were there no such thing as external Revelation. From the Pulpit, Morality has been earnestly recommended, and Christianity but coolly regarded; much said of the Light of Reason, the eternal Fitness, and immutable Obligation of Things; but little of the Gospel Means of Salvation, of Wisdom and Righteousness, of Sanctification and Redemption; as if Christianity could not be supported but by the Law of Nature; or the Text of the Apostle not become a Rule of Duty, till proved to agree with the Opinion of the Philosopher. So that the pious and judicious Laity have long complained, that Revelation and Divinity are almost forgot amongst us.

And the Consequences of these Doctrines have at last appeared in a very fatal Manner. First, by throwing so much weight into the Scale of Reason, so little into that of Revelation, as if every one had a Right to model a Religion for himself; the Libertines of the Age have taken occasion to despise the Authority of Scripture, to look upon its Precepts as superstitious or unnecessary, to remove all those Terrors which brought any Restraint upon their corrupt sensual Gratifications, and by lessening the Expectation of that Glory which shall be revealed, indulge with greater Security their beloved Vices in the present Enjoyment of Sense; by which Means the  
great

great Motives of Religion (which are not to be demonstrated from mere Reason) have lost their due and proper Influence on the Minds of Men. And notwithstanding the loud Pretences to Morality, the End of their Arguments and Practice is to teach us, that there is no Necessity *to live soberly, righteously, or godly in this present World*. Secondly, we have lived to see Infidelity join issue in these very Doctrines, and from the avowed Tenets of modern Divines, raise such Objections against the Necessity or Expediency of Revelation, as neither have been, nor upon those Principles can be answered.

A thorough Conviction however, that this is the true State of things amongst us, that Heathenism and the Law of Nature have been carried much farther than Truth will bear, and that by this Means the Canon of Faith hath been perverted, and many Errors and Corruptions entred into the Church of God, was the sole Reason of putting the following Sheets together, and is now the best Apology for offering them to the Publick; and if by the Hypothesis herein maintained, Religion may be restored to its Original Authority, without any Debasement of Reason; if the Cavils of Libertines are hereby totally enervated, and the Objections of Infidelity meet with a full and easy Solution: If throughout, it be consistent with itself, with all the known Laws of Nature and Reason, and above all with the Proceedings of Almighty God with Man, it will deserve a serious Consideration before it be superciliously condemned, or magisterially rejected.

It is very certain that the Importance of the Subject loses much of its Dignity from the Manner of treating it; but Truth will bear Examination in the plainest Dress, and if by this Attempt Occasion be given to excite some abler Hand to bring it to due Perfection, it will be of service to Religion, which is all I aim at or can hope for. That there are many Defects in the ensuing Treatise, the Publisher is very sensibly convinced,

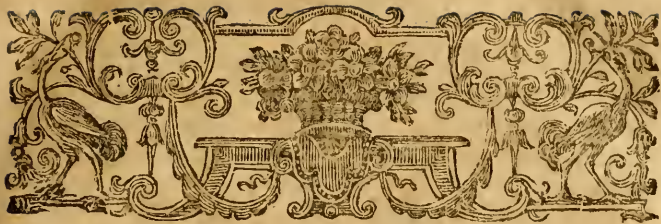
vinced, which he would not have imputed to the Subject, but to the Disadvantages he personally labours under. Such as,

*1st*, A long Difuse to those Studies which accustom the Mind to a solid Method of Reasoning and Concluding ; and which a Country Retirement, embarrassed with the Cares of Life, almost necessarily disable it from exercising ; and therefore is persuaded that many of the Arguments are capable of being put in a stronger Light, than that in which they are here offered.

*2dly*, The being furnished with a moderate Number of Books (and too many of them Translations) without Opportunity of consulting publick Libraries or Originals : If therefore some small Mistakes may have happened, he begs proper Allowances from the Criticks for them ; but persuades himself that there are none that can any way affect the subject Matter in Question.

But, *3dly*, A Sense of these Disadvantages, and the Want of Guides to follow in this Inquiry (none who professedly treat of it having fallen into his Hands) determined him to make use of all the Helps he could meet with from the best Authors ; not only to borrow Hints from them, but to transcribe their Arguments and Words, when suitable to his purpose. He is not therefore afraid of being thought a Plagiarist, but desires that if any thing valuable occurs, it may be ascribed to them ; if any thing weak or imperfect, to himself.

*Lastly*, As he has nothing in view but Truth, his sincere Wishes are, that whatever is built upon false Principles, may soon come to nothing and be forgot. Above all, as there is no Instruction or Knowledge in Divine Truths, but from the only sure Rule of Faith, the Word of God ; if any thing herein contained be in the least contrary thereto, he revokes it, disannuls it, and unsays it.



The Knowledge of DIVINE THINGS  
from REVELATION, not from  
REASON OF NATURE.

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C H A P. I.

*The Enquiry stated, and Objections answered.*

**T**HE Perfection of our Rational Nature is true Wisdom, and the Perfection of Wisdom is Religion, which consists in the Knowledge of God and of Ourselves; in Virtue and Obedience, in a well-grounded Peace of Mind, and the comfortable Hopes of a blessed Immortality: And that such Wisdom can only proceed from the Author of our Beings, is a Fundamental both in Divinity and Philosophy.

But as God has in divers manners spoken to us; an Enquiry arises, by what Method he has vouchsafed to communicate to Mankind the Knowledge of *Divine Things*, or those which concern his Existence, Nature, Perfections, and Will, and direct us to the Attainment of our final End, and ultimate Happiness. Therefore by Divine Things I understand the great Principles of all Religion, which may be comprized under the following Heads. The

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Existence

*The Knowledge of Divine Things from*

Existence of a Deity, and his essential Attributes. That Worship which is becoming, and due to such an infinite Being. The Immortality of the Soul. And a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life.

And allowing that some Men, especially the most wise and judicious in all Nations and Ages, have entertain'd a Belief of these great Truths; yet the Method by which they received the first Notices of them, cannot by any direct or necessary Consequence be thence inferred. So that pious and learned Men are not agreed by what Inlet or Means of Conveyance such Notions and Apprehensions of remote, invisible, and spiritual Objects entred the Minds of Men.

Most of the Opinions on this Subject, may be reduced to these three.

*First*, That we come at this Knowledge by innate Ideas; or having the Law and Rule of Life written and engraven on our Hearts, in such plain visible Characters, that whoever looks into himself will clearly discern the great Principles and Duties of Religion, and the several Obligations he thereby lies under to Obedience: This the Lord *Herbert*, and others have maintained.

*Secondly*, That Man by a due use of Reason, and contemplating the visible Works of Creation and Providence, may come at the Knowledge of God, his Duty, &c. without any external Aid or Instruction: which Opinion is defended, not only by Deists, but all those who teach a Religion and Law of Nature, independent on, and attainable without Revelation.

*Thirdly*, That the Knowledge of these supernatural Truths had no other Conveyance but that of Revelation, or those Discoveries which God has made of his Nature and Will to Mankind, without which they must for ever have remained ignorant of them.

them. And that those Communications which God made to *Adam*, *Noah*, and the Patriarchs, were, by traditional Conveyance from one Generation to another, the sole ground of divine Knowledge to the heathen World; and the Precepts thereof styled by them, Right Reason, the Natural, Common, and Universal Law.

And this last Opinion seems to me most agreeable to Scripture, Reason, History, and Truth; and what therefore I intend to explain and support in the following Treatise. But as I am sensible it is a Task of great Difficulty, and not hitherto professedly treated of; as also liable to many Prejudices from the Favourers of the second Hypothesis, at present almost universally established: I shall first endeavour to remove some Objections, which seem most naturally to lie against it.

I. It may be said, that it is introducing Novelties into Religion, and thereby disturbing the Peace of it.

II. That it is invalidating those Arguments drawn from Reason and Nature, which have been urged with such Success against the Attacks of Scepticism and Infidelity.

III. That it is an Assault upon the Characters of those many excellent Persons, who have defended Religion by Arguments deduced from the Religion of Nature.

IV. That it is depriving the Ancients of that Praise, which through so many Ages has been justly attributed to them, for those sublime Sentiments of Virtue and refined Systems of Morality they taught the World.

From Imputations of the *First* kind it is natural to seek for shelter under the Cover of some great Authorities; the Fathers, Councils, or the Judgments of some learned Men. I shall content myself at present with producing three or four Names

only, but in weight equal to many. Those are *Grotius* and *Puffendorf* abroad, *Barrow* and *Tillotson* at home.—The First, proving the Being of God from the Consent of all Nations, says, “ This can be  
 De Veri-  
 tat. &c.  
 L. 1. c. 1. “ from no other Cause, than either a Declaration of  
 “ God himself, or a Tradition derived from the  
 “ first Parents of Mankind: If we admit the former,  
 “ the thing in question is granted; and if we  
 “ affirm the latter, there can no good Reason be  
 “ given why we should believe these First Parents  
 “ did deliver a Falshood to their Posterity, in a  
 “ matter of the greatest moment.” *Puffendorf*  
 Leg. Nat. says, “ It is very probable that the chief Heads of  
 L. 2. c. 3. “ Natural Law were expressly deliver’d by God Al-  
 § 20. “ mighty to the first Mortals, and were from them  
 “ communicated to others by Custom and Institu-  
 “ tion.” *Dr. Barrow*, among the several Proofs  
 for the Being of a God, urges this, “ That it might,  
 Vol. II. “ from some common Fountain of Instruction  
 Fol. p. “ (from one ancient Master, or one primitive Tra-  
 116.) “ dition) be conveyed, as from one common Head  
 “ or Source, into many particular Conduits.” And  
 the last, speaking of the Unity of the Divine Na-  
 Vol. I. “ It is a Notion wherein the greatest and  
 Fol. p. “ the wisest Part of Mankind did always agree;  
 568. “ and therefore may reasonably be presumed to be  
 “ either natural, or to have sprung from some ori-  
 “ ginal Tradition delivered down to us from the  
 “ First Parents of Mankind.”

So that in the opinion of Persons eminent for Judgment and Learning, these important Truths might be conveyed by Tradition through successive Ages of the World; and that according to the several Degrees of Light Mankind received, they would reason concerning them with greater or less Advantage: And consequently such Hypothesis may be not only rational but probable, becoming the Divine Attributes to have acted by, consistent with  
 all



all the known Laws of Reason and Religion, and the Cause of Virtue be so far from suffering, that it may receive many corroborative Proofs and Illustrations from it.

As to Christian Peace, the only Bond thereof is the Unity of Faith; and as Truth can be but one, it is what all ought to search and pray for; when that is our sincere Aim, and carried on in a Spirit of Meekness, the Endeavour, tho' unsuccessful, will not be condemned by the sober and judicious Part of Mankind; especially in an Enquiry, where there is no breaking down the sacred Inclosures, nor rooting up ancient Foundations; but only a different Method of investigating the same thing, and intended to lead us up to the same Divine Original. The Laws of Revelation and Nature, all Knowledge both in Heaven and Earth, is from the same Fountain of Wisdom, the Father of Angels and Men, who always shines with a strong unchangeable Light: And to ascribe the Informations we have of the Divine Attributes and Will to his own immediate Manifestations, cannot detract from, but must rather add to the Characters of infinite Mercy, as well as Glory.

All his Creatures are intended for Happiness, and must have sufficient Means granted to attain it, which if the Author of our Being has not done, by any clear Impression on our intellectual Faculty, nor given us constant and ordinary natural Abilities unerringly to do it: Then an immediate Revelation of the Means and End must be consonant to those Ideas we necessarily form of Infinite Goodness, highly agreeable to the Expectations and reasonable Desires of his Creatures, and consequently suitable, fit, and proper to Divine Righteousness and Wisdom, as well as the Imperfections and the Wants of Men.

They who maintain the contrary must say, the Impressions on our Mind are so strong, that no one,

without some natural Impediment, can be ignorant or mistaken in his Duty; whence this Absurdity will follow, that Man by Nature is more able to know than he is to perform; can make a Law, but not fulfil it: Or that the Book of Creation is so plain and legible, as to direct an ordinary Capacity, with due Application, to Truth and Happiness; and unassisted Reason can instruct us in a Worship suitable, and well-pleasing to the Deity. Because otherwise Man would have an End, but not the Means, which is contrary to all the Ideas we can conceive of God. Both these Positions shall be considered; and if it appear, that Reason never did furnish Men with just Apprehensions of Divine Things, nor exhibit a tolerable Body of Laws, as a Rule of Life, what Mankind ought, or ought not to do; we must have recourse to some supernatural Means, for the obtaining what Nature or Reason could not afford them.

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kins:

Another Argument in favour of this Hypothesis, may be drawn from the Nature of Religion in general, which consists in just Apprehensions of the true God, and the Performance of such Worship as will procure his Favour and Acceptance. For the Being of God is the only Foundation of Morality as well as Divinity; and, according to the Apprehensions we have of his Excellencies and Perfections, such will our Notions even of moral Duties be. For the Obligation of all Religion, call it Natural, Moral, or Revealed, must be deduced from the Existence of God; and the Admirableness of its Precepts, from the Divine Nature and Perfections. Whence it will undeniably follow, that whatever System best instructs us in the Being and Nature of God, his essential Attributes and Perfections, his Providence, Works and Will, and establishes them on the most solid Foundations, that is the surest Pillar of Morality as well as Faith, because all their Duties, with the Eternity, Necessity, Fitness, and Relations of them,

them, must be thence derived with a greater Truth and Certainty.

But where has Reason given us any rational coherent System of the Divine Nature, his Self-Existence, Attributes, and Will, able to make Men good here, or happy hereafter? A System in which there is nothing inconsistent with Truth or with itself, no inextricable Difficulties and Absurdities that shock a well-informed Mind, and overthrow that Being and Providence it would establish? If Reason has not done this, it could never teach a complete steady Rule of Moral Righteousness. And because it has not done it, the ablest Defenders of Natural Religion are forc'd to make large Apologies for its many Defects and narrow Extent; acknowledging that Reason is too glimmering a Light to make a full Discovery of sacred Matters; that it is a Guide, of itself not able to direct or lead its Followers right, but often plunges them so deep in Error and Corruption, that they find an insuperable Difficulty to extricate themselves; that it not only renders every Step they take full of danger, but if they are not very wary in so thick a Darkness, most certainly proves destructive to them. Yet the same Authors allow, that whatever Sense the Heathens had of God, his Will, or their Duty, they had it from the Light of Nature only; and to this are owing the manifold Defects of ancient Theology.

But is not this confessing Reason to be a blind Guide, unable to direct us to Happiness, and therefore it is Prudence to look out for another? Is it not to measure the Moral Law of eternal Rectitude, by a broken, crooked, and unequal Rule, whilst we have in our hands a plain unerring one, whereby all the Doubts that confounded the Philosophers, vanish and disappear, their Mistakes are corrected, and the abstruse Notions which they could never reconcile, plainly accounted for. And this done in

that strong convictive manner, as to satisfy the Mind, and engage our Belief to rest an eternal Interest thereon. The Difficulty also still remains, it being impossible to prove, the Heathens had the little they knew of Divine Things from Reason only; it is what they absolutely disavowed; nor ever admitted an Article of Religion, but from a Persuasion, that it was communicated to them by the Gods, or the Sons of the Gods, who were best able to give an account of what related to themselves, and it was impious to dispute or deny what they declared.— This is more than some Christians will allow; but whether they will or not, Revelation has these two Advantages; that it is as capable of Proof as any other Subject, that is, as much as the Nature of the thing will admit, and Reason cannot demand more; and that when any thing is proved to be the Will of the Supreme Being, Reason is silenced, and Arguments are at an end. It is the Awe of the latter, that makes Infidelity cavil so much at the former.

The Second OBJECTION is, That this Hypothesis invalidates those Arguments drawn from Reason and Nature, which have been urged with such Success against Scepticism and Infidelity.

To which I answer, That this is the very Subject of Debate, whether such Arguments were drawn from Reason, or are not entirely owing to Revelation: Therefore I shall only observe here, that the attributing them to Revelation, does by no means exclude all those Benefits of Reason, which God and Nature intended, or judge the Advantages thereof unnecessary; as to ascribe more to it, is neither necessary nor rational. They are both the Gifts of the Father of Lights, Rays of that all-glorious Sun, who communicates his Beams of Brightness to every Creature, according to its respective Condition, and the Nature of its Being: both intended to excel-  
 lent, but different Purposes. The one lays the Founda-  
 tion

dation of Obedience to the Deity, the other enforces and defends it. Revelation exhibits the Principles and Duties of Religion, and binds the Obligation on our Souls, from the Consideration of God's Greatness, our own Immortality, and the Certainty of a Future State, Motives which Reason could not suggest. Then Reason, by its own strictest Rules and Laws, can prove, that all these are highly agreeable to the Dictates of Nature, fit and becoming all the Apprehensions we can form of an eternal infinite Being; adapted to all the Ends of Providence and Wisdom, best calculated to our truest Expectations and Wishes of Happiness, whether present or future, and that every thing in Religion is amiable and perfective. This is the proper Employment of Reason, and when used to these Purposes, is of the greatest Service and Advantage to Mankind.

But when it is made the Author and Foundation of Religion, appealed to as an infallible Director and Evidence, the Measure and Judge of Truth both Human and Divine, and nothing to be admitted but what she notifies and explains: This is perverting the Order of Things, and transgressing those Bounds which God and Nature have appointed to it. For as the Supreme Being preserves and directs all his Works to the End for which he created them, so he does it by the wisest Counsels and unalterable Laws. There is a Line which no created Understanding can pass, and whatever Faculties are given to a Being, must necessarily be confined within certain Limits, and their Operations proportioned to their essential State, according to the Maxim in Philosophy, *that what is received is proportioned to the Capacity of the Subject that receives it.* The Angels Nature is vastly more intellectual than ours, and yet they veil their Faces, can neither know nor comprehend the Glories of the Uncreated One.

Yet

Yet Men will not, in the Things of God, trust to God's Authority; they must examine them by Reason, and try them by the Laws of Philosophy, as the only Criterion to judge of Truth by: If they don't answer this Scrutiny, if we cannot grasp the Nature of them (tho' such as no human Sight can pierce) or want Arguments to establish them, we must suspend our Belief, or reject them. Whereas, for Creatures of such confessed Ignorance, to pretend themselves able to discover these Truths, is Arrogance; to determine them by their own Reason, is Profaneness. In all such Cases, we advance beyond what is natural or lawful, and wantonly encroach upon the Bounds of Immortality.

Reason is in Man, what the subordinate ministerial Power is in well-regulated Governments, not to enact Laws, but see the due Observance of them, to prove their Excellency, explain the Uses, and enforce Obedience from the Rewards and Punishments inseparably annexed to them. But to resist the Authority of the Supreme Power, dispute the Excellency of Laws, or refuse Obedience to them, because he was not the Enactor, or may not be able to discover the deep Counsels and Reasons on which they are founded; and put in an Appeal to an Inferior Court of his own erecting, to try the Utility or Obligation of such Laws, is both Folly and Rebellion.—Yet this Crime are they guilty of, who would determine Divine Things by Reason, Philosophy, or Natural Light. They appeal to an inferior, uncommissioned, and incompetent Judge, and can never shew their Right to such Claim, till they have proved these two Things; That the Knowledge of God can be limited, or the Mind of Man comprehend every thing.

Yet how far such Appeals have been carried of late, let every one judge; what Pains and Labour taken to reform Religion by Philosophy, (even to  
make

make mathematical Calculations of the Degrees of Probability in the Principles of Religion) that if one cannot be raised to the Sublimity of the other, we must reduce Faith to the Standard of Reason. In the modern Language, Divinity and Natural Theology pass for equivalent Terms: The Light of Reason stands for Faith and Revelation: Antiquity is represented, as in possession of all religious Truths, and Christianity little more, than a Republication of the Law of Nature. Morality, eternal Fitnesses and Relations of things are inculcated with great Vehemence, whilst we seldom hear of Wisdom, or Righteousness, or Sanctification, or Redemption.

And the Consequence has been, that Infidelity at last joined Issue with them upon their own Principles, and from the Concessions they had made undertook to shew that Christianity was not necessary, and by this advantage obtained a Triumph over them. For if Nature and Reason can so easily discover the most important Truths, it will follow, that the chief Purposes of Revelation are in a great measure useless, if not altogether unnecessary, and their own Arguments turned upon them, to root up the Foundations of all Religion. The Enemies of the Faith then asserted boldly, that the Law of Nature, or what the Light of Reason dictates, is the only Law of Man. That it takes in every thing, that is founded in the Reason and Nature of things, and therefore Revelation cannot be necessary: That God's Will is so clearly and fully manifested in the Book of Nature, that he who runs may read. And that he revealed his Will any way, besides the Light of Nature, can only come under the head of Probability: The Consequence of which they well know must be, that in proportion as Reason is exalted, and the Comprehension of human Minds enlarged beyond their proper Limits, just so far will Revelation be depreciated and rendered useless, till at last

Christianity as old,  
G. c. p. 23,  
24.  
Id. p. 162.

last Reason becomes absolutely independent and self-sufficient. Thus a Zeal for Natural Theology had well nigh destroyed all Religion, and Dr. *Clarke* fell a sacrifice to *Tindal*, by the very Weapons he had put into his Hands.

Yet there is no Observation capable of fuller Proof, than that Religion, through all Ages of the Jewish and Christian State, was more or less pure according to the Alloy of Philosophy or human Reason mix'd up with it. There was not an Error or Heresy in the Primitive Church, that was not imbibed from *Plato's* Academy, *Zeno's* Portico, or some vain Reasonings of the Pagan wise Men. In latter Ages the Schoolmen rejected *Plato*, and exalted *Aristotle* into the Chair of Christ, says *Tilenus*: esteemed him the God of Wisdom who could not err. And the Controversy long subsisted to which of them an Appeal lay for the Determination of Truth; so that there was great Necessity for the Apostle's Caution, *Col. ii. 8. Beware lest any Man spoil you, through Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men*— which have always proved highly injurious to the Purity of Religion, and the great Objects of Faith which are supernaturally revealed. Many fatal Instances might be given of this in *Origen* and others. It was the affected Title of a Philosopher, and the superstitious Adoration of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, that made *Julian* an Apostate. This drove *George Trapezuntius* to the extravagant Attempt of proving the Conformity between the Doctrine of *Aristotle* and Scripture: And hurried *Hermolaus Barbarus*, Patriarch of *Aquileia*, to the detestable Impiety of consulting the Devil for the true Meaning of *Aristotle's* ἐπιλέχεια. And *Ramus* for his Animadversions on that Philosopher, was assassinated in *Paris*, his Corps dragged through the Streets, and whipped with Cords. So overheated have some Mens Heads been, that they  
looked

*Tilenus*  
*Syntagm.*  
*part. 2.*  
*Disp. 16.*  
*Thef. 31.*



looked upon all as Infidels and Hereticks, who had not the same Veneration for the Philosophers, as the Apostles. In one Christian Country they have taught that our Articles of Faith had been imperfect without Philosophy: And in another read *Aristotle's Ethicks* on *Sundays* to the People instead of the Gospels. Such is the vain Arrogance of human Reason as to have puffed up some in every Age, to promise they would shew us the Truth by the mere Light of it, and maintain it as the only Rule of Faith.

On the contrary we may safely affirm, that no one ever looked for God and divine Truths by Reason only, but missed both one and the other. And surely we may in these Searches admire Reason, tho' we adore Revelation, and where we cannot fix their exact Bounds, rather stop too soon in our Determinations than too late; not thinking of our selves more highly than we ought to think. For it is no Abasement of human Nature, to say, it is not Infallible, nor has all Truth under its View. Man is furnished with every thing proper or necessary to his Condition, and his Glory must be to act according to the Order and Perfection of his Being; but as he cannot exceed the Powers bestowed on him, it is not Justice but Presumption and Error to ascribe Operations to him, which he never could attain or fulfil — Man has a Law (as all other Creatures of God have) which he is capable of obeying, and it is highly unphilosophical, an arbitrary Assertion, to affirm he has performed Actions, which no Principle, no essential Power, no Experience, has or can prove him capable of.

The ancient Times, in whatever Light we view them, are a convincing Proof of this — The most exalted Capacities that soar'd as far as Reason could lead them without any superior Assistance, always found themselves entangled in inextricable Difficulties,

ties, which not being able to solve, they pronounced Incomprehensible, and finding it impossible to arrive at clear Certainty or Knowledge, fell into the other Extreme; and because the Intellect could not comprehend all Truth, concluded there was no Rule or Measure of it; that because all things are not evident, nothing is. They so far discovered the Weakness and Confusion of Reason, that many affirmed there was no such thing as Science or Certainty, and that all our Wisdom never went beyond Opinion and Probability.

This at least may hint to us the unmeasurable Distance betwixt Man confined to the lowest Story of the World, and that Light which dazzles the Angels; and that it is not so easy a matter to pierce those Veils and Clouds which God has placed between him and us, and discover his Existence, Nature, or Essence. It may teach us to distrust so wavering a Light as that of Nature, and adhere more closely to the Revealed one, which will supply its Defects, and leads us to Truths, which no Philosophy ever did. “To find out Error, and know a thing to be false, is Wisdom, but only human Wisdom; beyond which no mortal Mind can reach.” *Democritus* was so sensible of this, that he affirmed, “He had rather discover one true Cause of things, than be Master of the *Persian* Empire.” But to know the Truth is divine Wisdom, which Man never can, nor was intended to attain, except he is taught by God. Hence so many false Religions of old, and they who condemned them, could not find out a better. This was the utmost Stretch of human Philosophy, to discover what was not true, but could not find out or tell what was so.

Laſtant.

P. 73. 127.

Euseb.

Præp. l. 14.

c. 27.

The Stoicks above all others were Boasters of Wisdom, pretended to know all things and be deceived in nothing. Yet *Plutarch* says of them;

“ That there neither had been, nor was a wife <sup>Repug.</sup>  
 “ Man on the face of the Earth.” *Cicero* derides <sup>Stoic.</sup>  
 their Pretence, and says, “ No Mortal ever attained <sup>In Lælio.</sup>  
 “ what they call Wisdom.” *Stoici eam sapientiam*  
*interpretantur, quam adhuc nemo mortalis est consecu-*  
*tus.* He denies not, as some did, the Truth of eve-  
 ry thing; but affirms that Falshood is so closely  
 joined with Truth, and so like it, that there can  
 be no sure Rule of judging or discerning betwixt  
 them. He saw the Vanity of the publick Religi-  
 ons, but stood in suspense, not knowing what Path  
 to take: And in this Distress of Mind uttered that  
 passionate Wish: “ O! that I could discover <sup>Lactant.</sup>  
 “ Truth with the same ease that I can detect Fal- <sup>Id.</sup>  
 “ hood.” But this exceeded his Strength, and that  
 of every other Mortal.

The Third OBJECTION is, that this Hypothesis  
 is an Assault upon those many excellent Persons,  
 who have defended Religion by Arguments drawn  
 from Natural Theology.

As to the many admirable Treatises, wrote to  
 demonstrate the Existence and Attributes of the  
 Deity, with the great Duties of Religion thence to  
 be inferred, according to the different Relations  
 we stand in to God, our Neighbour, or Ourselves;  
 they are worthy of all possible Reverence and  
 Esteem, have been managed with the utmost Strength  
 of Judgment and Perspicuity of Reason, strong and  
 conclusive Arguments, in a Method strict and de-  
 monstrative, beyond what other Ages have produ-  
 ced. They are the Honour of the present, and  
 will serve for the Instruction and Imitation of fu-  
 ture Times. But notwithstanding this, I can dare  
 to affirm that these Enquiries were carried on, these  
 Principles so firmly established, these Consequences  
 so incontestably demonstrated, not by the Strength  
 of Reason or Light of Nature; but by an as-  
 sistance far superior, the Light and Evidence of  
 Reve-

Revelation. It was under the Direction of that unerring and eternal Truth, that clear and more infallible Knowledge, than geometrical or metaphysical Demonstration, that the exalted Reason of these excellent Persons hath carried their Labours so far in the service of Religion — And if they had not had the Gospel in their Hands, they would have wrote as loosely and incorrectly, as the Philosophers before them. Let them have Honour, but the Glory of it be ascribed only to God.

If this be not the Cause, let some other be assigned, why they write on divine Subjects so much clearer and fuller, and more consistently than the Ancients did; or shew, which of the wise Men did it: For Nature and Reason are still the same; the intellectual Faculties were as strong then, as they are now. But the Truth is, unassisted Reason was not sufficient for the Task, and the primeval Revelations were become so obliterated and dark, that they had little advantage from it, except retaining the Names of Things. And Mankind looking on it as a natural Right to argue for themselves, every one enquired after God in the same manner as they did after Natural Things, *i. e.* they sought for him in their own Minds, and endeavoured by the Force of their own Wisdom to find him out; but not being able to do it, contented themselves with what seemed most probable. And though every one's Sentiment differed essentially from another, yet the Prejudice in favour of his own Understanding, made him zealous to maintain it; so there were as many Opinions, or different Gods, taught and defended, as there had been Philosophers in the World.

Most of them retained or picked up some Truth, but not being able to trace out the Causes or Consequences of Things, or comprehend the true End of Man, for which he was created (which not one

Athenag.  
P. 28.

Lactant.  
p. 623.

of

of them ever did) could not produce proper Arguments to support the very Truths, they were in possession of. And the Spirit of Contradiction so far prevailed, that when they were in the Right, they disputed themselves out of it, and brought every thing into Confusion. So that in Divine Things, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what their real Thoughts were, or what it was they had a mind to establish. If men surmise, or guess right, yet have no certainty, it is Opinion, not Knowledge; they stumble upon Truth, but do not find it; nor is it Truth to them, as not knowing, or being capable of proving it to be so.

Lactant.  
1. 3. p. 300.

Arnob.  
p. 46.

So that if Truth was in Philosophy, yet when divided into so many Sects, not one Point (except Names) agreed on, there was Opinion, but no Knowledge among them; for Knowledge consists in Certainty, Opinion in what is doubtful. And the only Conclusion to be drawn from such a variety of Teachers, Contradictions, and Uncertainties, is that none of them understood the System of Virtue or Religion scientifically. In such a Diversity then, whom must we follow, or what believe? Where shall Truth be placed? If in one Sect, you destroy the rest; if in all, you destroy Truth. For Truth is but one, and always consistent; the Philosopher never consistent with Truth or with himself. Therefore such a party-coloured Scheme as they offer'd must be false, no sure Law or Rule of Life to be extracted from it. For they had some excellent Notions in the general, such as to pursue Good, and avoid Evil: Yet the Difficulty lay in applying them to particular Actions. They were sensible of this, and complained of it, as the Cause of all Evil to Mankind. Τῆτο γδ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἀτίον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντων τῶν κακῶν, τὸ τὰς προλήψεις τὰς κοινὰς μὴ δύνασθαι ἐφαρμόζειν ταῖς ἐπὶ μέγας.

Lactant.  
P. 110.

Epicet.  
1. 3.  
Dissert.  
126.

They knew not what was Good or Evil, so could

not apply the Rule to Practice; the Principle was good, but the Conclusion generally Falshood. And what was Divine in Theory, became uselefs in Life.

If it be otherwise, and supernatural Truths are so evident to the Light of Reason, why did they not with Ease and Certainty arrive at the Knowledge and Uses of them? Why not all agree in necessary, fit, congruous, eternal and unalterable Principles, so as to draw sure and steady Consequences from them, without approving and condemning the same thing, in points of highest importance, or confessing themselves so divided in Thought as not to know what to determine? Which of the Philosophers, *Plato*, or *Aristotle*, or *Cicero*, did this? Let him be named, that we may know where to find this Body of Ethicks, and complete System of Moral Righteousness: One whose Doctrines are so consistent, as all of them to be justifiable; for if any be allowed, so must the whole, or the Man can be of no Authority. For whoever is guilty of Contradictions, or utters as much Falshood as Truth (which is their Case) deserves Credit on neither side of the Question. Because there must be an eternal Dispute in separating things, what to admit, or reject, since the Balance is equal, and both have the same Grounds for Assent; and consequently neither Scale has power to determine the Judgment. For if there had been any sure Rule of coming at Truth in one Case, it must also have directed in the other. If there was not, a Proposition tho' true, was only Surmise, a Lesson learned by rote, not Certainty in him that delivered it.

What Dependence then can there be on the Ancients? If we disagree, or are mistaken in natural things, there is no harm: to know them is little Profit, to be ignorant of them little Disadvantage. But in divine and moral ones, which are to direct us to our final Good, there is no room for Disagreement

ment or Error; Philosophy must have but one Voice, must think and speak the same thing, for here Mistakes are fatal, and the End of Life destroy'd. To rest it therefore on the Consent or Practice of the Heathens, is to place it on the Winds and Waves, which are not more uncertain than their Faith or Morals were. Name any one Doctrine relating to spiritual Subjects, and I will shew an hundred Contrarieties, an hundred incompatible Notions concerning it, among these so much boasted Ancients; and amidst so much Confusion, what can be determined? Our Idolatry exceeds theirs; Heroes were once deified for real Virtues, Philosophers at present for imaginary ones, for what they absolutely disclaimed; and we must not believe *them*, lest we hurt an Hypothesis that cannot be supported without giving the Lye to what they affirm concerning themselves.

Which of them does not constantly lament the Ignorance, Weakness, and Inability of Human Nature for these Speculations? I shall have occasion to produce them elsewhere, so need mention but one or two at present. *Socrates*, who stands in the foremost rank, is full to this purpose; The Vanity of others in pretending to Wisdom, and the little Truth or Solidity he found in the Learning of the World, fully convinced him of what he so often repeated; That he knew but one thing with Certainty, and that was his Ignorance of all things. *Plato* over and over again reminds his Hearers, That in these Subjects they were not to expect Proof, but only Probability for them. *Aristotle* condemns his Predecessors as the most foolish and vain-glorious Persons in the World, from a Conviction of their Ignorance, and the Vanity of imagining that he had carried Philosophy to the utmost Perfection it was capable of. Though no one said or believed less of divine Matters than he did. *Tully*, though such

Cic. Tusc.  
Q. L. 3.  
N. 28.

an Admirer of Philosophy, frequently complains that among the Multitude of its Professors there never had been one wise one — That we are blind in the Discernment of Wisdom—That some unaccountable, we know not what Error, and miserable Ignorance of the Truth, has got Possession of us—

Acad. Q. which he accounts for in this manner. “ That all  
l. 4. n. 39. “ Things are surrounded and concealed with so  
“ thick a Darkness, that no Strength of Mind can  
Id. l. 4. “ penetrate them.—That Knowledge is hindered by  
n. 3. “ so many Obstructions” — that the wisest of the  
Ancients did not without reason distrust their ever  
being able to find out what they desired— “ That  
Id. l. 1. “ this induced *Socrates* and all of them to confess  
n. 12. “ their Ignorance, and believe that nothing could  
“ be known, comprehended, or understood:”  
Not out of Obstinacy or Dogmaticalness, but from  
the Narrowness of their Senses, the Weakness of  
their Minds, the Shortness of Life, and Truth being  
hid as it were in a deep Well. Hence all things  
were maintained from Opinion or Precept, not from  
any sure Rule of Truth: For all things were invol-  
ved in impenetrable Darkness.

Who therefore would not distrust such a Guide, as Reason or Nature, which the Heathens found so miserably blind and defective, and could receive no Comfort or Satisfaction from? Yet this was always the Case. In things remote from Observation, and less cognisable by the Senses, Philosophy could never go far, but being perpetually at a loss, was forced to give over the pursuit; like one that knows not the right Way, when he comes to a place where the Road divides into different Paths, stands in suspense, not daring to choose any, and not able to follow all. Such is the Condition of him who has no certain Knowledge of the Truth, he wavers in his Mind, changes his Opinion as often as any suspicious Objections come in his way, is in a restless



restless Condition, and floating on Uncertainties. This could proceed from nothing, but their Ignorance of Supernatural things, which surpassed the Efforts of Human Understanding, and what unassisted Reason could give them no Satisfaction in. They understood not the general Propositions, therefore could not possibly see the Consequences which necessarily flowed from them, and this made their Arguments commonly to err so wide from the Truth, and be altogether inconclusive.

Of abstracted invisible things they knew little, and agreed less; when they reason'd on the Creation, and first Principles out of which all things were formed, they were so divided, "That a Mind Cic. Acad. Q. 1. 4. n. 34.

"of a divine Understanding would be at a loss, "which Philosopher's Opinion to choose," yet more than one he could not, such were the Diffensions among those great Men: — "What seemed cer- Id. n. 40.

"tain to one, had scarcely the appearance of Proba- bility to another, so equal are the Reasons even for contrary Opinions, that we can neither imagine or know, whether this World was framed by divine Counsel, or not." — When they argued on Providence, *Zeno* and the Stoicks tell them, "That the Æther informed with a Mind, is Id. n. 41.

"the greatest God, and governs all things;" *Cleanthes*, his Disciple, "That the Sun ruled, and had the Direction;" Thus by the differences of wise Men, we know not what God to serve, the Æther or the Sun — "One will have us all Soul, and ano- Id. n. 45.

"ther all Body—Some placed moral Good and Diog. Laert.

"Evil in the Nature of Actions, and of Things; others maintained that all Actions were in their Nature indifferent, and become Good or Evil from Institution only, as Law or Custom had determined." — Every thing but Truth had its Patron and Defender. Ask them the Reason of this, and they will tell you, "That each supported his Tusc. Q. 1. 4. n. 3.

C 3

" own

“ own Opinion, because nothing better was offered.” Or allowing that some few (two or three says Dr. *Clarke*) by Travel, and Collections from foreign Schools, together with observing the Works of Nature (the principal Subject of Philosophy) did raise their Minds to juster Contemplations of the Deity; yet their Notions of his Attributes and Will were so imperfect, that they could never frame such a Connexion of divine Truths and their Obligations, as to influence the Heart, reform the Manners, or direct the Practice of themselves or others.

*Pythagoras* on this account changed the Name of wise Men into Lovers of Wisdom, as believing it not to be attained by human Means. For if the study of Philosophy, or Application, had been a certain Path to it, it must have been discovered by some of those exalted Spirits. But when through successive Ages so many great and accurate Minds were broke, and worn out in the Search of it, yet all in vain: It shews the widest difference between Philosophy and true Wisdom, and that its Professors neither knew, what, or where the Truth was, they so ardently sought for. *Cicero* observing this, it made him lay down the following Rule for his philosophical Enquiries: “ That as Judgment was  
 “ free, and every one at liberty to support his  
 “ own Opinion, he would not tie himself down to  
 “ any Sect or School, but always adhere to that  
 “ which was most probable.”— And yet what is the Conclusion of all his Labours consecrated to the Search of disinterested Knowledge, beyond what any other uninspired Person ever made? “ We only  
 “ follow Probabilities, and are not able to go a  
 “ Step further.”

And whatever extraordinary things the Maintainers of the Law of Nature, in support of their Arguments, have said of the Ancients; yet finding them so often at a loss, perplexed, and entangled; in

in their cooler Hours they speak of the Weakness of Reason (and of them) as the Philosophers did; and make such Concessions, as utterly invalidate its Testimony. I have a right to appeal to them, which I shall frequently do, and think the Cause might be left to their Determination.

But from what has been said, an Observation arises, which, being allowed on all hands, ought to be carried through this Dispute, and that is, the great difference between Reason in a State of Nature, or assisted with very small Degrees of external Light; and Reason guided by Revelation, or directed by Grace; both which have removed the Doubts and Obscurities of former Ages, plainly unfolded the sublimest Truths, the Existence and Essence of a Deity, the Means of Reconciliation; the Immortality of the Soul, a future State of Rewards and Punishments, and declared in the plainest manner, the Will of the Supreme Being, as a Law and Rule of Life to Men — What was to one Opinion, to the other is Evidence; what the Eye of Reason could not discover, that of Faith distinctly sees. One argues from Doubts and Probabilities, the other on firm established Principles, between which there can be no Proportion. And the former can only come under this Consideration: Not what Reason is able to apprehend when proposed, nor how far enlarge its Knowledge from the Advantage of ampler Discoveries, in discerning the Evidence of many Truths deducible from them, or Arguments for their Confirmation: But only what naked unassisted Reason could attain without any other Light or Direction — On this footing only the present Hypothesis is, or can be grounded; and will (I doubt not) appear equally redounding to the Honour of God, more consistent with Scripture, History, Reason, the Nature of Things, com-

mon Observation, and liable to fewer Difficulties than any other.

As to the Fourth OBJECTION: This cannot throw the least Imputation on the wiser Heathens, who by all Parties are allowed to have had a more defective Light, than what *Jews* did, or Christians do enjoy. To cast any Blemish upon them would be degrading human Nature, of which they were astonishing and illustrious Ornaments. They seem to have a Dignity of Soul peculiar to themselves, a Mind large and imperious, Thoughts manly and noble, Searches after Truth quick and indefatigable, Sentiments of Virtue in particular Instances very sublime, and carried human Wit and Reason to the utmost pitch it was capable of under their Circumstances. They now live in their Writings, more than in their Marbles, must be reverenc'd and esteem'd whilst Learning flourishes in the World, and will be Examples to all succeeding Generations. Their making such vast Efforts is truly admirable, and by what they have done, we may judge what greater Things they would have performed, had their Assistances been equal to those of later Ages; and to the want of them must be ascribed the many Errors and Imperfections they inevitably fell into; which to me seems the highest Encomium that can be given of them.

It is an amiable and noble Character to say, they did whatever was in their Power to benefit and instruct Mankind. As on the other hand, to suppose them able to have given the World a complete System of religious Virtue, yet did not, or would not do it, is staining them with the blackest Infamy and Reproach. Or to say, a perfect Rule of Life is discoverable by Reason, yet no such Rule is to be found in the collective Writings of all, much less in any one of those uncommon Spirits (who, if ever  
Men

Men did, made a proper use of their Intellectuals, by pursuing all the Means of Knowledge and Instruction) is to affirm and deny the same thing, that Nature can, and cannot do it; for these Propositions, "No Man has been wise, and no Man can be wise, are equivalent." And if it were a Task above their Capacities (as will be hereafter fully manifested) it must be so to every Mortal, who has no other Teacher; and there could be no such thing as Natural Religion.

Cic. Nat. Deorum, l. 3. n. 32.

It is therefore an Act of Justice we owe to Virtue, to them, and to ourselves, to examine their Opinions, embrace what is good, reject the bad, separate the Ore from the Dross, Truth from Fallhood, admire their Merit without idolizing their Authority, and praise their Virtues without subscribing to their Errors or Failings. Not to pay them an implicit Faith, and worship them as Gods, with Cicero: *Plato, Deus ille noster*. Nor choose to err with a Master, rather than be in the right with others: *Errare malo cum Platone, quam cum istis vera sentire*. Such was the Prejudice to Party rather than to Truth; or perhaps it is a Strength which few Men can arrive at, to preserve the entire Prerogative of Judgment, so as never to be over-ruled by false Reason or incompetent Authority. Nay, Plato, according to Ammonius, has given us a Rule to judge by, in all such Cases. "Socrates is dear, but Truth much dearer to us." And he puts into his Master's Mouth the same Advice to *Cimias* and *Cebes*; "Believe me only thus far as to have a great Esteem for Truth, but very little for Socrates." We must and ought to differ from every one, so far (and no further) as he differs from Truth. This is the Privilege of Reason, not to be fettered down by the Opinions or Understanding of others; and it is a real Greatness of Soul to preserve our Liberty entire, so as to be able to assert the

Ad Attic. l. 4 Epist. 16. Tusc. Q. l. 1. n. 17.

In Aristot. Categor. p. 4. Phæd. p. 91.

the one, and discard the other, according to our best Light, and the justest Apprehensions we have; and in all philosophical Enquiries to proportion our Assent to the different Degrees of Certitude, in the Subject of Debate.

*Plato* indeed spoke in a nobler Strain of the Deity, than any who went before him; yet delivers numberless things inconsistent with such a Being, and talks, as the Poets and others did, of the Origin, Nature, and Vices of the Gods. He has some inimitable Sentiments of Virtue, but at the same time defends many Principles productive of the foulest Errors. “No one had grander Ideas, or rose higher in sublime Notions, nor did any fall into more grievous and abominable Mistakes.”

Vid. Ser-  
rani Præf.  
in Phileb.

His Scholar *Aristotle* is another Instance of this; a Man of most profound Judgment and Accuracy, called the finishing Stroke of Nature, the Measure of human Understanding, as knowing all that any Mortal is capable of knowing: So that *Averroes* thought Nature was not perfect till he was born. Yet in the Articles of greatest Importance, even concerning God, he speaks contradictory and inconsistent things: And so perplexedly of the Souls Immortality, that, instead of clearing up Doubts, he raised the utmost Difficulties in the Minds of Men.

The same may be said of all the rest. If their Perfections were many, so were their Faults; their Virtues were great, but so were their Vices; if Rays of Light shine forth in their Writings, it is from the midst of a thick Darkness; and the Veins of Gold which lie in them, are hid under a Mass of Fable and Error. When therefore we meet with some glittering Expressions, and shining Sentences, we need not be transported, and lay so great a Stress upon them, as if the whole of their Religion was equally pure and orthodox. They are blended with Principles unworthy of a Deity and destructive

structive of Virtue; and when examined will be found to be loose independent Periods, without any Coherence to the Subject or one another. How dazzling soever they may be, their being mixed with so many false defective Notions, must convince us, that their Opinions are but the Shadows of Truth; and that no Rule of Duty can with safety be extracted from them; that Reason was insufficient to Divine Knowledge, and therefore great Caution should be used in forming our Judgments from them. If the Heathens, from perceiving this Imperfection of Nature's Light, with freedom examined and condemned each other's Sentiments; to deny the same liberty to Christians would be an unreasonable Imposition. Men of Parts and Leisure may read the Philosophers as an useful Entertainment of the Mind, and find many things truly great and worthy their Admiration: But as a Rule of Life, they are infinitely defective, and therefore of no use to the generality of Mankind.

Nor was this the Opinion of private Persons only, but of their wisest and best regulated States. When they wanted direction in religious Matters, they did not imagine their own or the Philosopher's Reason able to instruct them, but that they were under a necessity of applying to the Gods for a Rule of Devotion. *Cicero* instances this of the *Athenians*, who sending to inquire of *Apollo* what Religion they should profess and hold? The Oracle answered, "That of their Forefathers." They again demanded, since the Religions of their Ancestors were various, which of them they should pitch upon? The Oracle replied, "The best." This shews the Opinion of the Heathens, that a Light superior to that of Nature was wanted in divine Affairs; The only recourse was to the Gods. And at the same time gives a View of the lamentable Ignorance they were in concerning them, who had such Gods for  
their

their Counsellors, that could give no Description or Characters whereby true Religion was to be known, but those of Tradition and Antiquity. The Intent of the *Athenians* was to embrace the best, but neither they nor the *Pythian* could tell what it was. And it is amazing that Christians should refer the Determination of any thing sacred to a Nation, where both Gods and Men so avowedly confess their Ignorance.

I would from hence infer two Things; First, That we ought not to rest implicitly on the Authority of Philosophers; it being their peculiar Error, to be Slaves to an Hypothesis, and never sacrifice to Truth: Nor judge of the Light of Nature by sententious Scraps pick'd out of them, but from comparing the whole of what they taught with Truth. And Secondly, That if no better Light than that of Reason had been vouchsafed to Mankind, they had ever been to seek in these Points of the highest Moment, what was the End of Man, and what the sure Means of attaining it; as the most zealous Defenders of Natural Religion allow--To which I shall add, that from the beginning of the World, they would have remained in utter Ignorance of God and all manner of Religion.

For Reason cannot reach what is above it, without some assistance besides its own. The Philosophers knew more than others, but fell infinitely short of Truth. And their soaring so high in some things, then immediately dropping into an Abyss of Error and Impiety, ought to humble human Reason, and teach us this at least, that the philosophical Light in its utmost Strength stands in need of a Revealed one to supply its Defects; which was the great Want and Delideratum of the wiser Heathens—and at the same time makes us suspect, that in their loftiest Flights they raised themselves on borrowed Pinions. For in all Ages they wrecked their Brains to the utmost



most about important Points in Divinity, yet were forced to leave them undecided; The Attempt was at Impossibilities, and Reason ever found them out of its Depth, and beyond its Limits. So that Duty, Happiness, and the true End of Man, were never fixed or demonstrated by any one of them.

Nor let it be said, The Accusation is carried too far. Inquire of their professed Admirers and Advocates, and they will tell us the same thing: That with the good Principles they had received, they mixed the most ridiculous Trifles and Follies—Even *Serranus* can confess it of his beloved *Plato*, who from his almost incredible Knowledge of sublime Truths, God, the Soul, and a future Life, was called by Antiquity, the *Homer* and the God of Philosophers: By Christians the wisest, the best, the most useful and holy, the most venerable and divine of all among them: Yet taught the most prodigious Errors and abominable Vices. That he wandered about the wide Sea of Knowledge, impatient after Truth; but having no certain Port to steer to, nor Pilot to direct him, nor sufficient Light from Heaven to make Observations by; the Consciousness of his own Ignorance made him complain that he was (*κλυδωνιζόμενος*) tossed about like the Waves, and acknowledge the want of a divine Guide, and earnestly desire such assistance to arrive at certain Truth—He was sensible of the Depravity of human Nature, that the utmost force of Reason was weak and dull, oppressed by a gross earthly Ignorance; that the true and primitive Form of the Mind, now polluted with innumerable Vices, could not possibly be discerned. That great Disorders were introduced into the Soul of Man, and that we cannot judge thereof, by what we now perceive of it, inclosed within the Body, and defiled with many Evils. Like the Statue of the Sea-God *Glau-*

Præf. in  
Plat. Op.

X

Repub. 10.

P. 611.

Parts

Parts of it broke, others worn with the violence of the Waves, almost covered with Shells and Weeds, and Stones growing over it, that it retains but little of its ancient Form—" That the Mind at present has but little solid Knowledge, knows things but as in a Dream, and in reality is ignorant of every thing—And he was so far from ascribing Perfection to human Nature, that he affirms he had never met with a Man who knew what Virtue was."

Politicus,  
P. 277.

Meno,  
P. 71.

But though the pure Light of original Wisdom was, by Sin and the withdrawing of the divine Presence, exceedingly darkened in the Minds of Men, yet was it not quite extinguished; but by Conveyance of original Revelations, the Direction of Providence, and the constant Practice of religious Acts in some Parts of the World; the *κοινὰ ἔννοια*, common Notices of God, and his Worship, of Justice, and Society, were kept alive in the Hearts and Consciences of Men; by which means some Apprehensions of a Deity and Worship, however unbecoming, were retained in most Nations of the Earth.

Thus in the midst of a Night of Ignorance, some Rays of Light shone forth, but the Darkness comprehended them not. And when *Thales*, *Plato*, and others some Ages after imported into *Greece* more noble Maxims and general Propositions concerning God, Virtue, Happiness, and a future State; all that Philosophy could extract from them, was but mere Conjecture, the Inferences of little real Use, and the Conclusions often intolerable—Instead of improving Faith, they disguised it by their reasoning upon it, and mixing it up with their own Fancies and Superstitions. Though the Principles were good, yet the Arguments proved bad, from their being entirely ignorant of the Manner and Reasons of them. They had the Names, but not the Sense or Explanation; so that their Words

often

often expressed and signified more, than they did or could conceive in their Minds—This was the Occasion of their Inconsistency, neither the Terms, or Connexion of them being understood, made the Deductions irregular or monstrous; and from the Corruption of Truth did so much Error abound in the World. This made *Plato*, who at some times discourses most fitly of the Divine Nature, so constantly lose the Path he had entred on, and wander back to his former State of Darkness. Truths to them, were like Lightning in a tempestuous Night to a lost Traveller, which dazzles for a Moment, but proves of no real service to direct him. Even *Plato*, I say, who was vastly superior to all that went before him in the Knowledge of divine Things, and had learned enough to discern the Vanity of many prevailing Superstitions, could by the help of Nature or Philosophy go no further. But amidst the Perfections he had conceived of the Deity, recommends the Worship of false Gods, and the same Sacrifices as the People offer'd to their Idols. When one would think him on the very brink of Truth, he on a sudden turns back to all the Madness and Folly of his Country.

In *Timæo*.

X

Now if we try all Methods of accounting for this, we shall find none rational, or consistent with the Character and Dignity of this great Man, so impatient after Knowledge, who had treasured up such noble Principles, and yet was able to make so little use of them; but that Theology was not a Science; they understood not the Nature or Importance of it; neither what its Terms signified, nor what Consequences ought naturally to have been made from them; which they must necessarily have done, if what they delivered of sacred Matters had been of their own Invention. I am aware of what is always said in Answer to this; that the Fear of *Socrates's* Prison was the Cause of *Plato* and others conceal-

concealing their real Sentiments. But this is a Refuge so base and abject, as to render Philosophy and its Teachers contemptible both to God and Man. For if this Apology be true, it will follow, First, That we can never tell what their real Sentiments were, and therefore they cannot be appealed to upon any Occasion. Secondly, That they did not suppose there were any Obligations in Religion, since it was not attended with Hopes or Fear, Reverence or Obedience; for if it had, among the Thousands who every day rushed upon Death, for the sake of their Country, more than one must have been found, who dared to have sacrificed themselves for the sake of Truth. This evidently appears on the preaching the Gospel, when the Convert Heathens no sooner saw the Dependence of Religion on the Will of the true God, but every one was a *Socrates*, ready to undergo Martyrdom for it. This Method therefore of accounting for the Defects in Philosophy, is false or unworthy. But it is an Apology becoming the Dignity of *Plato*; it is a true one, to say, “ That *Grecian* Wisdom was the Spoil of “ *Egyptian* and Oriental Schools, where ancient “ Truths had been miserably mangled and defaced, and the Light of natural Reason was too “ weak, to restore them to their original Holiness and Purity.”

The same Observation will hold universally true, even of *Cicero*, the greatest of them; who in so many Places, especially his justly admired Dream of *Scipio*, wherein he soars with that Majesty, teaches us to despise the World, proposes such glorious Rewards to Virtue, touches the Passions with that Delicacy, that they accompany him to the Stars with a ravishing Pleasure, seem to hear the Harmony he describes above, and the Mind almost believes he is shewing the way to a real Immortality. Yet Reason is lost in the Clouds, his Wings  
fail

fail him, and he drops faster than he rose before; his mighty Genius could add nothing to what every Pagan knew, talks of the Deification of *Romulus*, the Eternity of the Soul, from the old but false Argument of its being the Principle of Motion, and a Self-mover, and instead of the Certainty of a future State concludes with the stale *Pythagorean* Doctrine of Transmigration. Thus *Plato* in his *Timæus* wanders into all the Errors that the Philosophers or Poets had done.

We say not, there are no divine Truths among their Writings, but none scientifically understood or proved. That the Philosophers spake well as learned Men, were Improvers of every Art and Science, except Divinity, in human Studies carried the Mind to its utmost Pitch, and in their Observations and Inferences from natural Things even seemed to surpass it. But in sacred Ones were ever at a loss, “They could not exceed the Powers of Nature, nor speak Truth on those Subjects, having never learned it of him who could alone instruct them; nor ever came so near it, as when they confessed their Ignorance of it.” Which may teach us, that our only sure Retreat is to a supernatural Light, and to have no Confidence in vain Philosophy, lest it deceive us to the Prejudice of Religion: A Caution which the early Christians always used. *St. Jerom* does not stick to say, *Et cum suis stultus Plato discipulis; Aristoteli sua argumenta non proderunt.* And he imputes the Rise of all Heresy to *Plato* and the *Platonists*. And *Origen*, That if one may dare to speak the Truth, the reading of *Plato’s* elegant Works profited but very few, if it profited at all — And what Poison lurks, how many Snares lie under the specious Words of Science falsely so called, appears from this Confession of *Ficinus*: That had it not been for the care of a learned Friend, these his beloved Studies had led him into

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Lactant.

l. 3. p.

212.

Epist. ad

Heliodo-

rum.

Cont.

Cels. l. 6.

p. 275.

the most pernicious fundamental Errors. We must beware then, that an Admiration of their Opinions beget not a Slavery to them. No *αὐτὸς ἔφα*, no Authority but that which is Divine, can be the Measure or Standard of Truth. The best of Philosophers, though he indulged himself in it, condemned it in others—*Apud quos tantum præjudicata opinio poterat, ut sine Ratione valeret Autoritas.* This may also shew us the vain Pretensions of modern Philosophy, that from the Clearness and Connexion of Ideas, Man may learn his Duty. Whereas the greatest Heathens, notwithstanding their Sagacity and Attention, had not clear Ideas of first Principles, nor saw the Connexion of one Duty upon them. As also of such other modern Doctrines: “That they who never heard of any external Revelation, yet if they knew from the Nature of Things, what is fit for them do, they know all that God will, or can require of them.”—Since it appears that all these things were above the Strength of human Minds; they neither understood the Nature of things, nor could assign one Reason for them, nor saw what was fit to be done, nor that it was the Will of God, nor their Obligation to practise it—And if they did not, it is Religion, not Reason, which teaches these Truths.

What I say is confirmed by the Judgment of most illustrious Men, at home and abroad. Among the latter, one of vast Erudition (the famous Monsieur *Perrot*) has these Words. “No one but a Novice in Philosophy, will think that all manner of Questions may be resolved by it; they who go further in the Knowledge of things, meet with greater Difficulties; two contrary Opinions are often equally probable; and if they embrace one of them, it is rather out of Inclination than Reason. Man cannot judge certainly of any thing whatsoever, his Reason deceives him as well

Cic. Nat.  
D.

Christia-  
nity as  
old, &c.  
p. 323.

“ well as his Senses; we live among Errors and  
“ Doubts, and have no certain Truths here be-  
“ low, but those which God has revealed. Take a  
“ sight of all the Schools of Philosophy, consider  
“ what they do, and teach there: You will find  
“ Presumption in some, Obstinacy in others, Igno-  
“ rance, Error and Weakness in them all.”—Since  
“ then Reason is so weak, that the least Difficulties  
“ puzzle it, is deceived and mistaken at every turn,  
“ let us be sure not to trust so blind a Guide, nor  
“ ground our Belief on so weak a Foundation—  
“ Not rely upon our Arguments, but upon him who  
“ made Heaven and Earth— Let us always remem-  
“ ber that we must believe in God and not our-  
“ selves, and if we use our Reason in what con-  
“ cerns divine Things, we only imitate the Cynick,  
“ who not contented with the Light of the Sun,  
“ took a Candle at Noon-day to search for a good  
“ Man.” To which his Commentator adds, “ That  
“ a Persuasion grounded upon the Light of Na-  
“ ture, ought to be considered in a Christian, as  
“ Eloquence in a Philosopher, or Agreeableness in  
“ History; they are no essential Parts, the want of  
“ them can be no Prejudice, though to enjoy them  
“ be no Disadvantage— But the Uncertainty of  
“ Reason and the Certainty of divine Faith must  
“ dispose us to be always ready to lose Sight of  
“ Philosophy, when it cannot be extended to the  
“ Doctrines that are above its reach, and beyond  
“ the Capacity of our Reason.”

Mr. *Locke*, who so thoroughly saw the Limits of  
human Understanding, and far from being preju-  
diced in favour of this Hypothesis, could not help  
remarking: “ Whatever was the Cause, 'tis plain  
“ in Fact, human Reason unassisted, failed Men in  
“ its great and proper Business of Morality. It  
“ never, from unquestionable Principles by their  
“ Deductions, made out an entire Body of the

“ Law of Nature. And he that shall collect all the  
 “ moral Rules of the Philosophers, and compare  
 “ them with those contained in the New Testament,  
 “ will find them to come short of the Morality de-  
 “ livered by our Saviour, and taught by his Apo-  
 “ stles; a College made up for the most part of  
 “ ignorant but inspired Fishermen.”

Clarke's  
 Sermon.  
 vol. 2.

To which I shall add the Testimony of that most  
 learned Philosopher and able Defender of Natural  
 Religion, Dr. *Clarke*: “ That notwithstanding the  
 “ original Fitness of Mens natural Faculties and  
 “ Capacities, to search after and apprehend God,  
 “ yet in fact Men, without the Assistance of Reve-  
 “ lation, did not attain to a right Knowledge of  
 “ him in any considerable Degree.—Of the Philoso-  
 “ phers themselves who should have corrected the  
 “ Errors of the vulgar, some argued themselves out  
 “ of the Belief of the very Being of God, some  
 “ by ascribing all things to Chance, others to ab-  
 “ solute Fatality, equally subverted all true Noti-  
 “ ons of Religion, and made the Doctrine of the  
 “ Resurrection of the Dead, and of a future Judg-  
 “ ment, needless and impossible: Most of them  
 “ allowed and encouraged the Worship of such false  
 “ Gods, as the Poets had first feign'd like the most  
 “ wicked Men—Some professed open Immorality—  
 “ Others by subtle Distinctions patronized particu-  
 “ lar Vices to which themselves were most addict-  
 “ ed—The better sort of them, who were the most  
 “ celebrated, and with the greatest Reason dis-  
 “ coursed, yet with much Uncertainty and Doubt-  
 “ fulness, concerning things of the highest Impor-  
 “ tance, the Providence of God in governing the  
 “ World, the Immortality of the Soul, and a fu-  
 “ ture Judgment. And excepting two or three  
 “ very eminent Persons, who appeared singly in so  
 “ many different Ages of the World, as Lights  
 “ raised up by Providence, to shine in a dark Place:  
 “ Excepting



“ Excepting these, I say, the generality of the Philosophers Disputes, even upon these most important Subjects, were managed in a way of Pride and vain Glory, Subtilty and Strife, ending in nothing but Words and empty Contention; and having little or no Influence and Authority, to amend and reform the Manners of a degenerate and corrupt World.”

Is it possible to give a more desponding account of the Light of Nature, than this? That notwithstanding the Fitness of Mens Capacities to search after and apprehend God; yet, in fact, without Revelation, they did attain no competent Knowledge of him. That all the Teachers of Mankind, who had no other Light to follow, were immoral Idolaters or Atheists, except two or three, and they raised up by the special Appointment of Providence. Must not Nature be a miserable Instructor, that, in so many Ages, such distant Parts of the World, so many Schools of Learning, with such indefatigable Pains as were taken, could produce but two or three, out of Millions of rational Creatures, to have any tolerable Apprehensions of the divine Nature, their first Cause, and last End? And yet these two or three, were so far from having any clear Ideas of a Supreme Being, or a Worship due to him, that many of their Notions were incompatible, and contradictory to all the Perfections we can conceive of him.

How then can Reason be the Origin of Religion, since it has neither Consent, nor Practice, nor a direct Knowledge of any one Truth? Yet all these Difficulties are removed, by allowing that divine Things were originally taught by Revelation, the Notices whereof passing by Oral Tradition only, in process of time became so altered and obscured, that Mankind had lost the true Apprehensions of Things, and could not recover the clear Knowledge

of them without a supernatural Assistance. And that this occasioned those lame imperfect Accounts of God and Providence, the Souls Immortality and a future State: And was the Reason, that the World for two thousand Years could not exhibit a tolerable System of Religion, draw up any regular Table of Commands and Prohibitions, or adjust the Limits of moral Good and Evil.

To what has been already said concerning the Philosophers, I shall add two Observations, as relating to the present Inquiry.

First, That their Testimony may be allowed as amply in favour of this Hypothesis as of any other.

Secondly, That none can with Justice be appealed to, who lived after the Revelation of the Gospel. And for the following Reasons.

Because Christianity made such an amazing Progress in the World; that as *Pliny* in a Letter to *Trajan* says, it had reached not only the Cities, but the Villages and the Country, and that great Numbers of all Ages, Sexes, and Conditions had embraced it — As *Tertullian* afterwards boasted; “ We “ have filled with our Company all Places except “ your Temples.” And because the learned Heathens having an inquisitive Curiosity after all new things, *Acts* xvii. 21. could not fail to inform themselves exactly of its Doctrines; from whence they received many and great Advantages, in adding a large Stock of new Truths to their former Attainments, in removing Difficulties which till then had been unsurmountable, spiritualizing gross and carnal Opinions, reconciling seeming Contrarieties till then never understood, clearing up obscure Fables and Traditions, and above all by engrafting sublimer Notions into their ancient Theology. All this they did very industriously, at the same time endeavouring by all possible means to disguise and conceal whence they borrowed them, that such Acquisitions

sitions might pass upon the World for their own. And as the later Platonists above all others, were engaged in this Undertaking, they can never be appealed to as proper Witnesses, in behalf of natural Religion, having so much altered what their Fathers professed, and made a thorough Reformation in Philosophy, by mixing so much of Christianity with it.

That they did study the Scriptures with great diligence, is evident from the many Instances in Ecclesiastical History, of those who in spite of their beloved Philosophy, and against all the Prejudices Men generally conceive for the Opinions they have been educated in, after long and mature Deliberation, being convinced of the superior Wisdom and Divinity of the Gospel, became its sincere Disciples and able Defenders. For not the Multitude only, but Persons eminent in Station, distinguish'd for Genius and Learning, Orators, Grammarians, Lawyers, Physicians, Philosophers, such as were skilled in all the Literature and Wisdom of the World, the most judicious and inquisitive of Mankind, Men of no easy Faith, (as *Trypho* derided *Justin*) but convinced by the Evidence of Truth, were added daily to the Church: Nor did they, till after a long and diligent Inquiry, give up their former Persuasions, and renounce a Catholick Religion established so many Ages, and in whose favour they were strongly prejudiced.

In the earliest days, the Proconsul *Sergius* and *Dionysius* the *Areopagite* were of this Number. But to omit many Instances, I shall only mention *Justin Martyr*, whose account of himself (in the Dialogue with *Trypho*) is very remarkable, and a most lively Representation of the Thirst the Heathens had for Knowledge, together with the little Satisfaction they received from it. And his Relation may deserve Credit, since Antiquity mentions him

as one little behind the Apostles either in Time or Virtue. In him we see the true Philosopher, impatient after Wisdom, laboriously collecting all the Learning of the Gentile World, yet unsatisfied in his most serious Inquiries after Truth. He first betook himself to the Stoicks, where finding no Solution to his Doubts, he went to a Peripatetick, but soon concluded that Truth did not dwell with him. Thence to a Pythagorean, who requiring the Preparatory Knowledge of Musick, Astronomy, Geometry, &c. he deserted him, and gave himself up to the Institution of an eminent Platonist, with whose Intellectual Faculties he was greatly taken, and resolved for some time to abandon himself to Solitude and Contemplation. He ransack'd all the Wisdom of the World, in search of God and Happiness, tired out, yet found no Peace or Comfort, every Step added to his Anxiety and Despair, but brought no Relief to his Mind. Till in his Solitude he met a venerable old Man, who fell into Discourse with him on the Excellency of Philosophy in general, and Platonism in particular, and soon convinced him of the Error of those, whom he depended upon as the Bulwarks of Learning, and thought nothing could escape their Penetration. It concerns me not, says the blessed Guide, what *Plato*, *Pythagoras*, or others maintained; he passes them by, and instructs him in the Nature of God, the Soul, and its certain way to attain everlasting Felicity. He then directs him to the Prophets, and the Scriptures, where true Wisdom only can be learned, and here the Disciple found rest to his Soul. I found this at last, says he, to be the only sure and profitable Philosophy. He immediately divests himself of all the human Learning he had collected from the different Schools, and even from his beloved *Plato*; adores his infallible Master and his Doctrine, and from the Force of heavenly Truth,

Truth, learned what no Philosophy could teach any of its Professors, to despise the Sentence and the Fate of *Socrates*, and become a Martyr for it. They both fell by Poison, but with vastly different Circumstances, one in Doubts, Uncertainty, and Ignorance, the other with full Hopes and Assurance of a blessed Immortality. Such were also *Tertullian*, *Minucius*, *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, &c. all Professors of Science among the Heathens, but by examining the Principles of the Gospel became its Profelytes and Advocates. And we may safely judge, the other learned Heathens, from being well acquainted with the Scriptures, though they did not become Converts, could not fail of making great advantage by it.

This Plagiarism the Convert Heathens expressly charge them with— “ That as the Ancients had  
 “ borrowed from the Prophets, so did the Mo- Just. Mart. Apol. 1. § 71.  
 “ derns from the Gospels.” And *Tertullian*, Apol. c.  
 “ Which of your Poets, which of your Sophisters 47.  
 “ have not drank from the Fountains of the Pro-  
 “ phets? It is from these sacred Sources likewise,  
 “ that your Philosophers have refreshed their thirsty  
 “ Spirits; and if they found any thing in the holy  
 “ Scriptures, which might hit their Fancies, or serve  
 “ their Hypothesis, they took and turned it to a  
 “ Compliance with their own Curiosity, not consider-  
 “ ing these Writings to be sacred and unalterable,  
 “ nor understanding their Sense. Every one inferring  
 “ and reforming as his Fancy led him. Nor do I  
 “ wonder the philosophick Wits play such foul  
 “ Pranks with the Old Testament, when I find some  
 “ of the same Generation among ourselves, who have  
 “ made as bold with the New, and composed a dead-  
 “ ly Mixture of Gospel and Opinion, as philosophi-  
 “ sing Vanity led them.”—So again, he taxes them De Ani- ma c. 2.  
 with mixing their own Corruptions with the Truths  
 they borrowed from the Scriptures, turning them  
 quite

quite another way, and making that little Truth a Plea for the rest of their Errors.

It was from a Converse with Christians, that *Epicetus* learned to reform the Doctrine, and abate the Pride of the Stoical School. *Philostratus* wrote of *Apollonius* to equal his Miracles with those of our Saviour; as *Eunapius* did those of the Sophists in opposition to the Primitive Christians. So *Celsus* and *Porphiry* studied the Scriptures on purpose to contradict them.

But hence proceeded another great Alteration in the Schools of Philosophy. The World had been overrun with Disputes, Contradictions, and finding Faults with each other. There was no such thing as a Catholick Philosophy or Religion, but every one having a natural Right to reason for themselves, pertinaciously adhered to, and defended their own Opinion. The Generality of Mankind, however, were divided between the Schools of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, and the Christians never failed to reproach them with the Disagreement and Contrariety betwixt them: That both could not be in Possession of Truth, and probably neither. That in Philosophy every thing was obscure, dark, and inconsistent; in Christianity every thing clear, rational, and satisfactory: To which may be added another Argument, that its Professors lived above the most exalted Notions the World ever had conceived of Virtue.

They seeing this Objection, in the present Circumstances of Philosophy, to be unanswerable, immediately endeavoured to make it more uniform, enrich it with the Additions of more excellent Truths, and reconcile the Principles of their Founders. It was the Attempt, and indefatigable Pains of many, *Porphiry*, *Boethius*, &c. and among the rest of *Hierocles*, to shew how their Opinions might be demonstrated to have a perfect Harmony  
and

and Agreement with each other. He indeed would have the World believe, that whoever imagined there was any difference between them, widely misunderstood the Sense of both these great Men. He however confesses, that such Irregularities continued till the Learning of *Ammonius* shone forth upon the World: Who, when he had purged the Opinions of the ancient Philosophers, proved that *Plato* and *Aristotle* in most material Points, were vastly uniform and agreeable. Therefore he calls him *θεο- P. 39, & εὐδαιμον*, one instructed of God, who by despising <sup>53.</sup> the various Opinions which brought such Disgrace to Philosophy, and thoroughly understanding both Sects, had brought them to a Reconciliation, and was enabled to give his Hearers an Hypothesis free from all Contention and Dispute.

*Hierocles* also attempted to reconcile the ancient <sup>P. 47.</sup> Oracles and priestly Laws of *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and all the Predecessors of *Plato* in the same manner; which was a Task of infinite Difficulty, and what therefore he laid out all his Strength of Understanding on, to make their Doctrines tally, and (as he describes those of *Socrates*) to stand upright like a Die whichever way they fall. His greatest Difficulty, after having read the Scripture-Doctrine of the Creation, was how to varnish over that monstrous Doctrine of two eternal independent Principles, God and Matter, and reconcile those distant Ideas of a Creator and increated Creature. But *Photius*, from whom we have this, says, all his mighty Contrivance ended in meer Trifles.

It is scarce then to be imagined, that the Philosophers of the second Century, *Marcus Antoninus*, *Maximus Tyrius*, and others were ignorant of the Christian Doctrine. Though the Reformation of Philosophy received the finishing hand from *Ammonius* who lived about the beginning of the third Century, and presided with great Honour over the *Platonic*

*tonic School at Alexandria.* A Man of such exquisite Learning, that they thought him inspired, being thoroughly instructed in all the Subtilties of the Pagan, and Mysteries of the Christian Religion. When such an one undertook to reform the ancient Philosophy, to reconcile inveterate Feuds which subsisted till that time between the Schools of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, it is no wonder, that, with these Qualifications, he was able to do it in an extraordinary manner; by paring off Superfluities, rejecting Fallhoods, abolishing those Niceties and Cavils which were a Disgrace to the Profession, and especially by adding many noble Sentiments to it, and thereby propound a more generous and regular System than the World had yet known.

*Porphyry* for the Credit of his Religion affirms him to have become an Heathen as soon as he studied Philosophy, and *Hierocles* seems to have accounted him so; but *Eusebius* and *Jerom* deny it, and testify that he died a Christian. And tho' his Scholars were of both Religions, as his Chair was particularly devoted to Philosophical Lectures, yet it is certain that he taught Divinity also, and had among others the great *Origen* for his Disciple. Nor is it easy to conceive, that in an Age when the Power of Godliness prevailed in the Minds of Men, and an holy Zeal to instruct the World made them prefer Martyrdom to Silence: That so great and good a Man should not take all Opportunities of making Profelytes to the Faith, and instruct his Hearers in the Mysteries of the Gospel, as well as the Speculations of Philosophy.

If we trace this Matter up a little higher, we shall find that the Thirst after Knowledge had for several Ages carried Men to the most distant Persons and Places, that made a Profession of Learning. Hence *Athens* and afterwards *Rome* became so crouded with the *Literati*. But no City enjoyed this Honour



nour with greater Advantages than *Alexandria*. Many of the *Jews* who escaped the *Babylonish* Captivity, fled to *Egypt*: And Multitudes of them, by *Alexander's* Favour, settled in this new Metropolis. And as the *Egyptians* were naturally inquisitive after their Mysteries, so undoubtedly the *Jews* communicated some proper Parts of their Knowledge to them, which afterward became fully opened in that inestimable Treasure, the Translation of the Scriptures by the *Seventy*.

It grew famous also for the noble Library founded there by *Philadelphus*, under the Care of *Demetrius Phalareus* (to which *Marc Anthony* added that of *Pergamus*) and the Encouragement its Princes gave to learned Men. The *Ptolemies* invited all the Philosophers of Eminence to settle there, so that it might be said, there were only Remains of Learning in other Parts of the World.

At the first planting of Christianity, *St. Mark* founded here not only a Church, glorious in its Patriarchs; but also a School which in time became the greatest Nursery of Philosophy and the Sciences. They who presided over it, were the most renowned Persons, admirably versed in all Learning human and divine, in the Depths both of Pagan and Christian Wisdom, so that it has been called the Universal School of the Church. Among its Rectors, was *Pantæus*, an excellent Stoick before he became Christian, and, as *Eusebius* says, well skill'd in human as well as divine Learning. He was succeeded by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, whose Writings sufficiently prove his extensive Knowledge in all Parts of Wisdom. In this number was the great *Ammonius*, the head of Philosophers in his Age, from whom all those Platonists stiled  $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\ \iota\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ , of the sacred Succession, derived their Notions. Such were *Origen*, *Herennius*, and *Plotinus* the Preceptor of *Porphyry*, as he again was of *Jamblichus*.

Hist. Eccl.  
l. 5. c. 10.

*blicus*. Origen was in such Reputation, that not only Christians but Philosophers flock'd to his Lectures, wherein, says *Eusebius*, he read the Mathematicks, and other parts of Philosophy, as well as the Scriptures — and where the most important Truths were constantly preached, and familiarly expounded, in their catechetical Exercises, it is impossible but the Subject of them must be universally known. After Origen were *Heraclas*, *Diomysius*, *Athenodorus*, *Malchion*, and *Didymus* who reach'd to the Year 300.

It was in this School that *Ammonius* undertook the Reformation of Philosophy, by blending *Platonism* and Christianity together, which was afterwards the principal Study of the Heathen Professors, such as *Plotinus*, *Amelius*, *Porphyry*, *Hierocles*, *Syrianus*, *Proclus*, *Marinus*, *Damascius*, and others of the sacred Succession. And he had several Views therein. First, That whilst they professed an inveterate Opposition to the Scriptures, they were at liberty to select out whatever would sublimate and refine their own Doctrines. Secondly, Thereby to raise the Value of *Plato's* Philosophy. Thirdly, To depreciate Christianity; and Fourthly, Especially to reform their natural Theology, and Dæmon-Worship, by paring off gross Abiurdities (at which the reason of Mankind was then generally shock'd) giving new Interpretations to things, which their Forefathers never thought of: And above all in asserting one Supreme Deity, tho' they could not agree in their Notions of him, either who, or what he was.

This tampering however with Philosophy gave a mortal Wound to Religion, its Beauty was sullied by such impure Mixtures: And from that bitter and poisonous Root, all the Errors and Apostasies sprang up, which have since befallen the Church of Christ. The Advantage however that redounded to Philosophy,

sophy, at the Expence of Christianity, which they plundered and adulterated, is evident from their writing in so much a sublimer Strain, than any of their Predecessors had done upon important Truths; such as the Degeneracy of Souls, and their Return to God, the Origin of Evil which had so miserably perplexed the Ancients, of Providence, and especially of the Eternity of Matter, so inconsistent with a Maker of the Universe.

For by advantage of the Scriptures, being come to a certain Knowledge of sacred Truths, which none before had a Possibility of doing, they borrow from them whatever could improve, or be reconciled with their own Systems, which they alter, disguise and blend in such a manner, as they hoped no one could know whence they had them. Upon this Stock they grow arrogant, and blame their Predecessors in the School of *Plato* for delivering some Doctrines, and interpreting others contrary to the Sentiments of their Master; though no such Arguments or Consequences are to be found in any of his Writings. These new Acquisitions they set up, and boast of as their own; and after altering, corrupting, and debasing the Truths of Christianity, pretend there is nothing worth taking from it, at the same time they triumph in its Spoils. But the Christians plainly saw the Theft, indict them as Plagiaries, and call such Proceedings an adulterous Mixture of Divine Truths with human Inventions. *Veritatis dogmata ad Philosophicas Tertul. Sententias adulterare.* That if *Plato* was charged Apel. p. 366. with purloining his choicest Doctrines from the Prophets, they did the same from the Apostles; and this made them speak in a Strain as much above *Plato*, as the Apostles did above the Prophets. All their admirable Contemplations and Discourses were not from *Plato*, but from Christian Masters, and their noblest Flights took wing from the Gospel.

From

From the Notoriety of this it is, that learned Men have opposed some Errors frequently urged by those who are engaged in advancing Philosophy against Divinity, which has of late been renewed amongst us, by overvaluing *Platonism*, as if it equalled, or in some of its Notions even outwent that Revelation, from whence all its admirable Discourses were borrowed. As also others, who would insinuate, that the Fathers of the Church corrupted the primitive Purity of the Gospel with Philosophy, and obtruded *Platonick* Euthusiasm upon the World, for Faith, Mystery, and Revelation: Both which opposite Opinions are equally false and groundless, and only advanced by those who would degrade the Gospel, by putting a philosophick Livery upon it, or by confounding them together destroy all positive Religion.

The Application I would make is this; if Reason be so sharp-sighted, as to discover all things essential to Natural Religion and Morality (as so called) How comes it to pass, that these later Philosophers reached a much higher Elevation, and wrote in so much diviner a Strain, than their Masters did, and excel *Plato* (who for so many Ages was the Deity of Reason and Virtue) as far as he did the most fabulous Theologists who went before him, in their Discourses on the Supreme Being, his Attributes, Creation, Providence, Nature, and the Immortality of the Soul, &c.? They could not have it from *Pythagoras* or *Plato*, who had made no such clear Discoveries; nor had any rational or tolerable Account till this time been given of them; they were Secrets to the Heathens, till they began to study in the Schools of Christians. From whence one of these Consequences will necessarily follow: Either that Reason in its most improved State, as supposed in the Ancients (who are allowed to have reached the very Extremity, and utmost Limits of human

human Understanding) was not able to attain a competent Knowledge of divine Things, for they were ignorant of them. It was a Point beyond *Aristotle's* Logick, wherein Syllogism and Demonstration always fail'd him. And tho' they added new Light to what they received from others, yet *Infelix operis summa*, nothing clear, rational, or consistent was delivered of God, the Soul, or Immortality; nothing regularly determined on these Subjects; nor was it possible there should, having no distinct Ideas of them, nor any one that could instruct them. And Philosophy without Evidence, is Knowledge without Science, a Sound without a Meaning—The Professor was *Glorie Animal, & popularis auræ vile Mancipium*, a Seeker of Renown, and a Slave to popular Applause. And his Profession was *Pbalerata magis, quam vera sapientia, quæ aliena querit cum sua nesciat; cæli plagas scrutatur, Deum ignorat quem solum nosse deberet.* A gilt Bubble, without Solidity or Uie, busy in prying into the Heavens, yet ignorant of God whom alone it ought to have been acquainted with—And the Character *Trismegistus* gave of the Greek Philosophy, was *Ἑλλῶνων φιλοσοφία, λόγων ψόφῳ*, nothing but a Jargon, and Rattle of Words.

Tertul.  
Epiſt. ad  
Jul. & de  
Anim. c. 1.

Ambros.

Or else they must have been the worst and wickedest of Men, that knowing better would still maintain so many Errors and Impieties, and not rescue the World from the miserable Bondage of Ignorance, to religious Truth and moral Righteousness.

Or lastly, Their Successors must have had some better Guide than Nature or Reason to direct them, which was the Gospel; and therefore cannot be admitted as Witnesses in a Cause, where Natural Religion is to be judged of.

I may add, that this is the very Case of modern Infidelity. How comes it to pass, that their Sys-

E  
tems

tems are more regular, and their Deductions of Virtue clearer, whence are those sublimer Duties and Notions, and Principles more solid, and better established, than appear among the Ancients? Are they wiser than *Socrates* or *Cicero*, is their Capacity of Mind greater, their Study severer, or their Knowledge more universal and extensive? Certainly the very Reverse, their Art is inferior, but the Materials they had to work upon were better, and therefore their Sacrilege the more notorious. They learned these things in the Word of God, and then disown their Benefactor; they take a great deal of pains to prove what no one denies, that the Existence and Idea of God, with the other great Truths of Religion, are most agreeable to the Faculties of the Mind, to Reason, and the Light of Nature; and thence draw an inconsequent Conclusion, that they originally were, and still may be, discovered by the meer Strength of human Nature, and thus become the Oracles of their own unassisted Reason.

And this Fallacy (from a Supposition that it exalts the Dignity of human Nature) has been too easily admitted, and deceived many; or rather is the whole Support of Natural Religion, as oppos'd to Revelation: That all those Truths and Arguments we now perceive the Certainty and Force of, must appear in the same Light to, and therefore might proceed from, a mere Philosopher, or Person in a State of Nature. And (with great Submission to the most learned Author's Judgment) this Mistake runs through the whole Delineation of the Religion of Nature; though in the Terms (or even Doubts) that he proposes it, no Advantages can accrue therefrom to the Enemies of Revelation. Speaking of the Soul's being a Principle of Life, he uses the following Words—" Here I begin to  
 " be very sensible how much I want a *Guide*; but  
 " as the Religion of *Nature* is my Theme, I must  
 at

“ at present content my ſelf with that Light which  
“ *Nature* affords; my Buſineſs being, as it ſeems,  
“ only to ſhew, what a Heathen *Philosopher* with-  
“ out any other help, and almoſt *ὡτὸς Ὀδῶν Ἰσραὴλ*,  
“ may be ſuppoſed to think. I hope that neither  
“ the doing of this, nor any thing elſe contained  
“ in this *Delineation*, can be the leaſt Prejudice to  
“ any other *true Religion*. Whatever is immedi-  
“ ately *revealed from God*, muſt, as well as any  
“ thing elſe, be treated of as being *what it is*:  
“ Which cannot be, if it is not treated with the  
“ higheſt regard, *believed* and *obeyed*. That there-  
“ fore, which has been ſo much inſiſted on by me,  
“ and is as it were the Burden of my Song, is ſo  
“ far from undermining true *revealed Religion*, that  
“ it rather paves the way for its Reception.”

I ſhall only obſerve from this Paſſage, that if no other Arguments were intended to be offered, but what an unaffiſted Philoſopher may be ſuppoſed to think; yet his Book is an entire Confutation of any ſuch Suppoſition; we can only know what they could do by what they did do, except any will be ſo ungenerous to ſay, they did not do their beſt. And no Philoſopher (notwithſtanding their many external Advantages) was able to diſcern the Nature or Meaning of theſe Truths, or did with any Degree of Clearneſs ſhew the Dependence of them on the firſt Cauſe, their Connexion with each other, or the Conſequences deducible from them, in any or all of their Writings; and this very Author did not put Truth in the Light he has done, by the Light of Nature, without any other help; but (whether, or no, he ſaw or acknowledged it) was entirely beholden to Revelation.

On the whole, nothing is here ſaid, that can be a Reflection on the Ancients, except their not being able to perform Impoſſibilities be one; they were Men of insatiable Thirſt after Knowledge, and their

Lactant.  
L. 3. P.  
210.

Attainments in it prodigious. Their Learning and Improvement of whatever was within their reach, is admirable, it was every thing except Divine. They discovered many Truths, but not such as were above the Attainment of mere Mortals. Their Desires and Endeavours were laudable, but could not have the wish'd-for Effect, to discern what Truth was, nor where, or by what means to be found. For whatever they knew, they remained ignorant of the true God, to know whom is the only Wisdom. We may therefore and ought to conclude them fallible, and reject their Errors, without being apprehensive that any Damage will thereby ensue to Religion, for that cannot be the Consequence by *Cicero's* own Rule. *Nec verò (id enim diligenter intelligi volo) superstitione tollenda, Religio tollitur.*

Divin.  
L. 2 .n. 72.

I shall at present add but one Argument more in favour of this Hypothesis. That as the only sure Rule to judge what Reason or Nature can do, is by what they have done, so this must be determined by known Facts, which is a safer Method to guide our Enquiries, than any unwarrantable Presumptions or Suppositions possibly can be. And since it is constantly affirmed, That the Heathens had no other Light to guide them but naked unassisted Reason, which is mere Supposition and Presumption, because they might receive their Knowledge another way, therefore the Assertion has a Possibility of being false, or in other Words is a real Uncertainty—I shall therefore appeal to unquestioned Facts, to History, and the Writings of the earliest Philosophers; all which unanimously confess, they had their Knowledge of divine Things by Tradition, not Invention, delivered from their Fathers, or borrowed from others; and to set aside the best, the only Evidence to be had (undoubted Facts, with the Confession of the Parties concern'd)



concerned) by Suppositions and Surmises, calculated to support any favourite System, is against all the Rules of Argumentation.

To clear up this Point is the principal Intent of the following Treatise: For if the Ancients had but a very weak imperfect Knowledge of Divine Things, and the utmost Certainty they could attain to in them, was extremely doubtful and precarious; the Consequence (I shall not fear) will be, that Reason and Nature are very insufficient Guides to Religion, to Duty, and to God. And if it afterwards shall appear that they received all their Knowledge by Instruction, it will be easily traced up, and by necessary Deduction follow, that the first and only Instructor of Mankind was God; and that all the Sense the World ever had of Religion, whether Positive, Natural, or Moral, must be referred to, and entirely depend on Revelation.



C H A P. II.

*Of the Inlets to Knowledge.*

**N**OW the first Point to give us any Satisfaction in this Inquiry, must be to consider the true Condition of Man, as he is a reasonable Creature or intelligent Being; and how he comes to be so. What the several Inlets of Knowledge are, whereby the Mind is furnished with Materials to think, judge, and exercise its several Operations on; that we may thereby see the Extent of its Views and Powers, and be the better able to judge of the Question before us, *viz.* Whether the sole Light of Nature and Reason were suf-

ficient to discover, and instruct the World in Divine Truths ?

Tho', methinks, it may be some Abashment to Reason, and that vast Perfection to which some would extol it, that it scarce knows what Man or Itself is ; for were these Points evident and certain, there could not have been such a Variety of Opinions among wise Men concerning the true Definition of Man, his End, and Means of Knowledge.

Some, from observing the wonderful Sagacity in Brutes, something in them so like Reason, have been induced to make Religion the distinguishing Character of Man, there being a kind of natural Propensity to it, *Quo omnes duce Naturâ vehimur*, says *Tully*. But this is contradicted by other Philosophers, who make Brutes, especially Elephants, capable of Religion.

Some define Man to be a moral Agent, or a free intelligent Being, as having a Power to act, or not to act, and thereby able to give an Account of his Actions, and be subject to Rewards and Punishments, which are the final End of Man. And Lord *Herbert* was of this Opinion, That we are more distinguished from Brutes by Free-will, than by Reason.

*Anaxagoras*, according to *Aristotle* and *Plutarch*, thought Man to be the wisest Creature, because he had Hands.

The Peripateticks and Stoicks defined Man to be a Compound of Body and Soul. The *Platonists*, a divine Mind chain'd down in an earthly Prison : One made the Mind a Part, the others the Whole of Man.

But the generally prevailing Definition is, That Man is a Creature endued with Reason ; that being the Faculty which distinguishes him from others, or constitutes him what he is, an intelligent Being.

But

But here again to prove how remote we are from Perfection, it need only be observ'd, That tho' Man evidently has this Faculty, and it is the peculiar Excellence and Glory of his Nature, yet we know not what it is, nor can Reason, that aspires to define every thing, define itself: We can only explain it by Effects and Operations; but how, or in what manner they are produced, are not able to conceive; nor wherein the inward Operations of the Mind consist; what its Freedom, Power, and Choice are; how we apprehend or think; or how this thinking Being within us, by its free Action, can cause and determine such voluntary Motions, as we are convinced that Thought alone produces in us.

The principal Operations of this Faculty seem to be,

*First,* To perceive and apprehend what is offered to it.

*Secondly,* To consider such Object according to the different Views or Circumstances it may appear in, uniting, separating, or comparing it with others already known, reflecting on its Nature and Cause, its Tendency and Effects, 'till the Mind attain a clear and distinct Knowledge of it.

*Thirdly,* To examine the Connexion of one Truth with others, and by Deduction from those which are known and evident, discover the Certainty or Probability of other Truths or Propositions it did not so clearly perceive before. And thence,

*Fourthly,* To fix its Judgment, or Degrees of Assent that ought to be given, which must in all Cases vary according to the Evidence that appears. Where the Connexion is clear, the Mind will approve and acquiesce in it, as Knowledge or Science, whereof it can have no Distrust. Where the Connexion is but probable, the Assent will be suspended, because the Inference is doubtful, and the Con-

Cic. Acad.  
Q. 1. 4.  
p. 12.

Acad. Q. 1. 4. n. 15. clusion on either Side no more than Opinion. If there appears a Disagreement in this Connexion, then the Illation manifests it to be a Falshood, and the Mind cannot but reject it. And the Perfection of our intellectual Faculties consists in rightly using the intermediate Steps, that may enable it to distinguish between Evidence and Opinion, Probability and Certainty. And the most exalted Reason is no more than the Discernment of Truth and Falshood.

Yet if we come to examine the Rules by which Mankind give their Assent to many Propositions, differing from and contradictory to each other, we cannot think the Procedure of the Mind to be a very easy, or sure Performance. The Bounds of Truth and Falshood have never yet been settled; one is assured of what another is diffident; Evidence in *Egypt* is but Probability at *Athens*. And by all Experience and History, we find there has been so little Exactness or Certainty in the Conclusions of Mankind, that they seem to be the Result of Inattention, Passion, or Interest, rather than proceeding on any sound Principles, or in any rational Method of Argumentation for the Discovery of Truth.

Nat. D. 1. 3. n. 37. From whence such Perplexities and Errors, such Mistakes and Falshoods have been propagated in the Minds of Men, so much Mischief done in the World by Reason, that it was a Doubt to *Cicero* whether it were a Blessing to Mankind or not: For the great Misfortune has been, that Men took that for Light which was real Darkness; yet followed it as bewildered Travellers do the *Ignis Fatuus*, which leads them to Precipices and Ruin. It has been Reason only that rendered Mankind in all Ages so shamefully unreasonable; and Philosophy was the Guide to all Errors under the Sun; and what Right Reason, the so much boasted of

of *ὑπερὸς λόγῳ* is, remained a Question undetermined.

II. Man was created to Practise, as well as to Know. He has a Law given him, the fulfilling of which is the Perfection and End of his Being; and as he is a free Creature, has a Power to weigh, reject, or choose the Means conducing thereto; for in being at perfect liberty to act or not to act, consists the Freedom of Human Will, and such Election makes an Action his own, because he wills and chooses it, is able to give Reasons for his Determinations, to declare the Cause or Motive which influenced him to prefer one Counsel or Action before another, and thereby becomes accountable to the Lawgiver, and liable to the Sanctions of the Law, Rewards or Punishments. This Freedom of Will makes him a moral Agent; to choose Means fit and proper to attain his End, is Moral Goodness; to choose such as are contrary to the Law and perfective End of his Being, is Moral Evil: And these two Faculties, the Reason and Will, constitute Man what he is, a Free Intelligent Being. *Virtus tota nostra est, quia posita est in voluntate faciendi bona — Sicut Virtus non est, bonum ac malum scire; ita Virtus est, bonum facere, malum non facere.* Lactant. l. 6. p. 514.

And as the Intellect is conscious of its own Operations, and from comparing the Action with the Law, perceives its Agreement or Disagreement therewith; from hence arises another Power called Conscience, or the internal Judgment of a Man's own Mind, of the moral Rectitude or Pravity of what he has done; and this so essential to, and inseparable from the Mind, that it can never cease to be self-conscious, 'till it ceases to think.

The Sanctions of this Internal Law and Judgment are, either a secret Pleasure from having acted according to the perfective Principle of our Beings; or

or having done what, as moral Agents and rational Creatures, was fittest for us to do: Or a Shame and Reproach for having abused the Freedom of Will, in doing what, as Men, we ought not to have done, and approving that which our own Mind condemns and forbids.

For when Men have used the utmost Means in their Power to inform themselves in the Nature of Duty and of Sin, they are a Law, a Rule of Living to themselves. Their Consciences also (by judging of the moral Tendency of their Actions) bearing witness, and their Thoughts (or inward Reasonings) mean while accusing or else excusing one another; acquitting or condemning them, according as they have acted conformably to the greatest Light of their Mind, and the Law of their Being.

Nor have the Thoughts and Opinions of Men been less divided, concerning the Means whereby the Intellect is supplied with its Stores of Knowledge; what are the several Inlets of the Mind, whereby it is furnished with such Variety of Materials to think, reflect, or judge upon, and what its different kinds of Notices are. One would imagine that no Point could be more obvious to Reason, than to look into itself, and at once declare all its real ways of coming at Knowledge; yet nothing has embarrassed it more, than to find out the Doors by which its own Furniture was brought in, as appears from the different Hypotheses, and many Volumes which have been wrote upon this Subject. And yet a right Determination of it, or a certain Account of the Avenues and Ways whereby our Understandings come to attain those Degrees of Knowledge we have, would be of the highest Service to Truth, and shew us the Part which Man bears in the intellectual World, more clearly than any other Considerations or Arguments whatsoever.

Of these different Inlets I shall mention Four, as being the most principal, and to which the others may be reduced.

1. Innate Ideas, or Principles stamped and engraven on the Soul immediately by God.

2. The Instincts, or natural Propensions.

3. Sensation, or Ideas of external Objects conveyed by the Senses; under which, in a larger Meaning, Instruction may be included, as comprehending all those Parts of Knowledge, which the Mind receives from the Information of others by the help of the Senses, in which consists the Difference between Instruction and Illumination.

4. Reflexion, or the inward Operations of the Mind.

I should scarce have mentioned these Ideas, they are so unphilosophical, and void of all Foundation in Reason or Nature, did we not find them perpetually lurking under this Debate, in the Expressions of Knowledge connatural and coeval, common Notions, clear Impressions of God on the Conscience, &c. That the Ideas of Wisdom, Virtue, Vice, &c. must needs spring up from the active Power and Fecundity of the Mind itself, because the corporeal Objects of Sense can imprint no such things upon it. Others are afraid that learned Men have gone too far in their Disputes against these Ideas, for that nothing is meant by them, but such a Sense or Knowledge as Men may have without any other Monitor but their own naked unassisted Reason, from a Consideration of the Works of Creation, &c. which is a different Means of Knowledge, and the Argument an Equivocation, in tacitly affirming and denying the same thing.

Cudworth  
Morality,  
l. 4. c. 2.  
p. 149.

The strict Maintainers of these Ideas say, That there are some primary Notions and general Principles of the Law of Nature, so indelibly stamped and impress'd on the Soul of Man, that it receives  
them

them in its very first Being, and brings them into the World with it; so that the Mind cannot but necessarily perceive, know, and assent to them as distinct and actual Propositions; and readily expresses and utters them as soon as it arrives at the Use of Speech and Reason, without further Instruction or Meditation.

But this Opinion is perplexed with such Difficulties, so contrary to Observation and Experience, and utterly incapable of Proof, that it is almost universally given up by learned Men, both Divines and Philosophers, as an unwarrantable Fiction, a kind of Magick to solve all Doubts, and throw down all Objections we know not why, nor how, and introduced only to support Doctrines which Men could not scientifically account for. Before any Principle is admitted, it ought to have all the Demonstration the Mind can require, and carry such Marks of Truth and Certainty, that no reasonable Objections lie against it. Yet inbred Notions, occult Qualities, and the like, are to stand instead of Evidence, must admit no Doubts or Objections, however liable to them; must stop every Inquiry about them, as, Whether all Men receive them with an universal and full Consent? Whether they are equally known and attainable by all? Upon what Arguments they are founded; or, Whether they may not be come at by some other Operations of the Understanding, or Means of Knowledge? For any Proposition, call it innate, undoubted, universally acknowledged, or self-evident, if liable to any of these Objections, is no Principle, but the mere Effect of Ignorance, and intended to suppress the use of Reason.

The Original, however, of this Opinion was probably owing to some Expressions of the Ancients, and Texts of Scripture, neither of which will bear such Sense or Interpretation.



I. Phrases of this kind are common among the Greeks : Thus *Plato*, κατὰ φύσιν τὸν νόμον, *the Law of Nature* ; and *Iamblichus* in latter Ages, περὶ θεῶν ἐμφυτος γνώσις, *an inbred Knowledge of the Gods*, and σύμφυτος αὐτῶν κατανήσις, *a Perception of them born with us* ; and *Chrysostom*, ἐμφυτον ἀπασιν ἀνδρώποισ ἐπίνοιαν, as also, ἀπλὴν, πρῆσβυτάτην περὶ θεῶν ζυγγενῆ ; and *Clemens Alexandrinus*, Θεῶν ἐμφασιν φυσικῆν. And among the *Latins*, to mention only *Cicero*, *Infitas eorum, vel potius innatas cogitationes habemus* ; and, *Omnibus enim innatum est, & in animo quasi insculptum, esse Deos* ; That the Belief of the Existence of the Gods was born with every one, and as it were engraven on the Mind.

Repub 5.  
p. 456.  
§ 1 c. 3.  
de Myster.

Nat. D.  
L. 1.  
id. c. 4.

The Antiquity of this Persuasion, and its being coeval with our Souls, proceeded from several Causes or Mistakes.

1. The observing that we did not come by this Knowledge, as we do by other Parts of Learning ; that it is something superior to the Mind of Man, ancients than our Judgment or our Will, prevents Reason and Demonstration, what we cannot prove or disprove at our pleasure : And therefore not being able to find out its true Source, they concluded it essential to, and coeval with our Beings.—Or, 2. Men finding themselves at a loss to solve the Manner of our conceiving immaterial and heavenly Things, would not give way to such a Thought, as that we should conceive them by the Help and Intervention of any thing in this World, there appearing no Congruity or Proportion between them ; and therefore had recourse to innate Ideas for that purpose, which should be the Objects of the pure Intellect, independent of all Sensation, discovering some early Notices in the Mind, which *Plato* says they sucked in with their Mothers Milk, and not knowing by what Inlet they were received, concluded them con-nate and coeval. 3. They could not discover it was ever

Proced. of  
Human  
Underst.  
V. 1. p. 89.

ever originally delivered by any one Man to the rest of Mankind, or who those were who first invented this Notion, That there is a God; therefore concluded it natural and innate. 4. This was a Consequence of what they believed concerning the Souls Original: That they were Portions of God, according to *Pythagoras*, of their very Divinity and Mind, says *Cicero*; or with the Stoicks, of the Mind universal and Soul of the World, which was with them the Supreme Deity; and pre-existing from Eternity, enjoyed a spiritual intellectual Life, in conversing with the Gods and one another; whence their Knowledge grasped whatever is in the Nature of Things, and what they could not lose during their several Transmigrations.—And this is the Ground of *Plato's* famous Doctrine of *Reminiscence*: “For, says he, As the Soul is immortal, and frequently returns to Life, and sees whatever passes in this World and the other, there is nothing which she has not learned. Whence it should not seem strange, that she is able to call to mind what she has formerly seen of Virtue and other things: And there being a Relation throughout Nature, and the Soul having learned every thing, nothing can hinder a Man who recalls but one thing to his Memory, which we call Learning, to find out every thing else, if he apply his Mind to it; for to investigate and learn, is nothing else but *Reminiscence*.” And again, Knowledge is the Reminiscence of those things the Soul saw when it was with God.—On these Considerations, the Heathens might conclude there were original Principles, or an innate Knowledge which the Soul brings into the World with it.

II. There are also some Texts of Scripture, whereon, it is said, these innate Ideas may be grounded, as *Romans* ii. 15. where *St. Paul* mentions the Law written in the Hearts of Men, even Heathens.

To

*Timæus*  
c. 8.

*Diog. La-*  
*ert. Vit.*  
*Zeno.*

*Meno.*  
p. 81.

*Phædrus,*  
p. 249.

To which it is answered, That a principal Distinction between the *Jews* and *Gentiles* was, that one had a written Law, the other not : That before the Age of *Moses*, the whole World was subject to the same general Law, as it had been given to *Adam*, *Noah*, &c. from God, and by them delivered to their Posterity, who were subject to the Sanctions of it, in Rewards and Punishments, which in justice they could not have been, except it had the Force of a Law, and received sufficient Promulgation. Thus the Patriarchs were justified in obeying, the *Sodomites* and others condemned for disobeying the Law delivered to them ; and After-ages had these general Notions of Duty and Sin providentially continued down to them, to keep Conscience and the inward Senses of the Soul awake, and thereby render them excusable or inexcusable.—And all the ancient Commentators understood these Words ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη, for when the *Gentiles*, &c. *Romans* ii. 14. of those who lived before the Law, as *Melchisedeck*, *Job*, &c. or who repented as the *Ninevites*, or who had learned the Worship of the true God, as *Cornelius*. This was their νόμος ἀγράφτος, *unwritten Law*, for the Heathen World had no other : *Draco's* were the first (and those chiefly political ones) committed to Writing in *Greece*, about 624 Years before Christ ; and a Moral System was not attempted, till *Socrates* taught it, and *Xenophon* and *Plato* recorded his Sentiments.

Whitby in  
Loc.

But Secondly, The wisest Writers on the Law of Nature interpret these Texts as a figurative Expression, and implying no more than a clear and certain Knowledge treasured up in the Memory, of which the Persons spoken of are convicted in their own Consciences, by what Means soever these Notions entered into their Thoughts. And to write in the Mind, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γράφειν, & *scribere in animo*, was a Phrase in common use with the *Greeks* and *Latins*,

Puffendorf  
Law of  
Nat.  
L. 2. c. 3.  
§ 13.

as

as well as the holy Penmen both of the Old and New Testament.—*Solomon* frequently uses the Expression, *Prov. iii. 3. My Son, write them upon the Table of thy Heart.* So again, *vii. 1. and Jer. xvii. 1. The Sin of Judah is written with a Pen of Iron, and with the Point of a Diamond, it is graven upon the Table of their Heart.* Not that Sins were thus originally engraven, but were so heinous that the Memory of them could never be obliterated. So *Ezek. xiv. 3. They have set up their Idols in their Heart,* to denote their inward Affection for Idolatry.—Thus *St. Paul, Ye are our Epistle written in our Hearts, known and read of all Men.* And again, *Ye are the Epistle of Christ, written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God.* And *Heb. viii. 10. I will write them in their Hearts.* All which can import no more, than any Truth's being made clearly known to them, and the Law so plainly taught, as to be easily perceived by them all, that whenever they transgressed it, their Consciences secretly condemned them for it.

Thirdly, If we consider the Perspicuity and Evidence wherewith the almighty Framers of our Beings could have impressed and manifested his perfect Law to the Minds of Men, and this had been the only Method of discovering his Nature and Will to us; then the frequent Revelations he afterwards made, would have been useless, or contrary to his own Purpose of Acting; and the Knowledge of Divine Affairs would have been much more distinct and clear among the Gentiles, than it appears to have been, or is represented in the Holy Scriptures, where their defective Knowledge in these Truths is described, and in that very Chapter, *Rom. ii. 19. as blind as those who sit in Darkness, as Children and Babes.* To remedy which, to restore and fulfil the Law then become utterly depraved and corrupted, was one great Intent of the Gospel. Innate Ideas therefore

therefore have no Foundation in these Texts, are repugnant to innumerable Passages in Scripture, contrary to Fact and Experience, and the Proceedings of God with Men. Had their Light been clear and perfect, such would be the Obedience demanded of them ; but these were Times of Ignorance, and God required it not ; and it would be inconsistent with the Divine Equity to condemn his Creatures for not observing impossible Conditions : But it was the not doing what they might have done, the *holding Truth in Unrighteousness*, the not choosing Virtue and avoiding Vice according to the Sufficiency of Aid they had received, but committing those Actions which their Consciences condemned them for, that render'd them totally inexcusable.

Fourthly, Therefore, the κοινὰ ἔννοια, those common Notions or Principles they had, were only traditional Notices of the Universal (and consequently Moral) Law, scatter'd up and down among the Gentiles, but were to them the Measure of Good and Evil ; for by reason of these being fix'd in their Consciences, they are said to *be a Law unto themselves*, as having this inward Rule to direct their Actions by. These Zeno called καταλήψεις, *Comprehensions*, and Epicurus προλήψεις, which Cicero renders *Anticipations*, but may be called also *Opinion*, or *Persuasion*. These were ἐντολαὶ αἱ κατὰ νόμον τε κ' πρὸ τῶ νόμου, *Precepts of Law, and before the Law*, for ἕτε τῶς πρὸ νόμου ἀνόμου εἶναι, *even those before the Law, were not without a Law*.

And in this Sense the wisest Heathens seem to have understood it. Thus Xenophon represents the Opinion of Socrates : That as to unwritten Laws, received over the whole Earth, which it was impossible that all Mankind (as being of different Languages, and could not be assembled in one Place) should make, that these were given us by the Gods ; and that no Man impunibly violates a Law estab-

Cl. Alex.  
Strom. 7.  
p. 704. D.

Mem. loc.  
L. 4. P.  
165.

lished by the Gods; That the Laws of Morality are the Work of a more excellent Legislator than Men; and whatever Force the Laws have, they receive it from the Gods. And this was a Maxim which *Socrates* always maintained, *That Virtue was a Science, i. e. not inbred, but to be learned like any other.*

Diog. La-  
ert. Vit.  
Plat.  
288.

Vid. Gale,  
134.

So *Plato* defines the unwritten Law to be  $\delta\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}$  ἔθνη γινόμενος, *that which proceeded from Custom, i. e. Actions conformable to the common Notions of Mankind; and this seems to be the true Meaning of his τὸ τῆς φήμης, the Law of Fame or Report; which, tho' by Serranus and others interpreted of the Power of Conscience, with him a kind of Dæmon in Men, plainly refers to those traditional Truths Oral Fame had handed down to them, which he so often appeals to, and grounds all his Doctrines of Theology on; and not on any inward Signature or Impressions. And he was one of those great Minds, whom God in different Ages raised up, by Travel and Searches, to collect the scatter'd Fragments of Truth, and become the Teachers and Instructors of Mankind. So that, amidst a general Corruption, there was a Light that shone in Darkness, by a due Attention to which they might have made a stronger Discernment, and passed a truer Judgment upon Things. And their Crime was, the not obeying Truth, according to the Aids of Knowledge afforded them, nor the Degrees of Conviction they were under.*

Plutarch.  
ad Prin-  
cip. In-  
doct.

These active internal Principles were the Law of Mankind, not that which is written in Books, or engraven on Wood, but  $\epsilon\mu\psi\upsilon\chi\omicron\varsigma$  ὡν ἐαυτῷ λόγος; *the living Reason in every Man's Heart, always alive and watchful together with it, and never suffering the Mind to be without a Director. And from a Sense of these (which were universally extended to some more, to others less) and the self-reflective Acts of the Mind, which are called Conscience, proceeded*

ceeded those Stings and Remorses, on committing what they themselves condemned. This *Laius* in the Tragedy confesses :

Λέληθεν εἰς ἐν τῶνδε μ', ὧν σὺ νοθετεῖς, &c.

All these things which you advise me, I already know, but notwithstanding this Knowledge and Conviction, Nature hurries me away. And *Medea*, Καὶ μανθάνω, &c. which *Buchanan* thus translates :

*Videoque quantum perpetrabitur nefas,  
Sed pessimorum facinorum genitor furor,  
Ratione major, me retrorsum distrabit.*

And *Ovid* in *Metamorph.*

————— aliudque cupido,  
Mens aliud suadet : video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor. —————

All which are a full Comment and Explanation of *Rom. ii. 14, 15, &c.*

Fifthly, Innate Ideas cannot prove the Truth of any Proposition, because every Man has as good a Right to deny, as others to affirm them. And this probably was the Reason why *Epicurus* appealed to them, in order to deceive the World with a popular Argument, and leave the Existence of the Gods on a Footing which he knew could never be maintained. *Cicero* states it at large in the Sense that *Epicurus* understood it ; that without the Idea of a thing we can neither conceive, speak of, nor dispute about it. That all Men and Nations have an Idea and Notion of the Gods, independent of Learning, is an Opinion not derived from Education, Custom, or Human Law, but is the firm unanimous Persuasion of all Mankind. It is therefore from Notions implanted in our Souls, or rather innate, that we conceive there are Gods ; for that in which

Vid. Cl.  
Alexand.  
Strom. 2.  
p. 388.

Euripid.  
Act. 4.  
p. 206.

Nat. Deor.  
L. 1. N.  
43, 44.

the Nature of all Men agrees, must necessarily be true. Some have unwarrantably urged this Argument under the Name and Authority of *Cicero*; tho' he only introduces it as the Opinion of a particular Philosopher or Sect, and immediately denies the Principle on which it is grounded, that of *Universal Consent*: *Equidem arbitror multas esse gentes sic immanitate efferatas, ut apud eos nulla Deorum suspicio sit.* He verily believed there were many Nations so savage as not to have the least Notion of a God. And when he uses it in any part of his Works, it is not as a Proof, but to take the Existence of the Gods as granted, which must otherwise be perpetually proved. *Si hoc non probas; à Deo causa ordiènda est.*

Creed,  
p. 18.

For these and many other Reasons, “ The wise  
“ and sober Men of all Parties (*says our excellent*  
“ *Bishop Pearson*) are agreed, that the Soul of Man  
“ has no connatural Knowledge at all, not even of  
“ a Deity: No particular Notion of any thing in  
“ it from the Beginning. But that as we can have  
“ no Assurance of its Pre-existence, we may more  
“ rationally judge it to receive the first Apprehen-  
“ sions of Things by Sense, and by them to make  
“ all rational Collections.” If then the Soul of  
Man be at first like a fair smooth Table, without  
any actual Characters of Knowledge imprinted on it;  
if all the Knowledge we have comes successively by  
Sensation, Instruction, or rational Collection; then  
must we not refer the Apprehension of a Deity to  
any connate Notion or inbred Opinion; at least we  
are assured that God never charges us with the Know-  
ledge of him upon that account.

The same Judgment is passed on these Ideas by  
the wisest Philosophers and greatest Masters of Reason. *Puffendorf*, *L. 2. c. 3. § 13.* affirms such original  
Characters to be no more than unwarrantable Ficti-  
ons: That the Readiness which we see in Children,  
and



and in the ignorant Multitude, to distinguish Right from Wrong, is owing in a great measure to Exercise and Use, whilst from their early Years, and the first Opening of the Reason, they observe good things to be approved of, and evil things to be exploded. As for the lowest Degree of Mortals, who are acquainted with the Law of Nature, chiefly by popular Information and by common Use, they ought to require no further Proofs of its Certainty, than that, 1. The Exercise of it is maintained by their Superiors, by whose Authority they are to be guided. And then, 2. That they themselves cannot find any probable Reasons, by which they might either confute or weaken its Force. And, 3. Because they are every day sensible of its Usefulness, and the Benefits which it confers upon Mankind. And upon this account, the Law of Nature appears to be sufficiently promulgated; so that no Person of competent Years, and of sound Understanding, can by any means plead invincible Ignorance of it.

Which is not only giving up these original Impressions, but at the same time affirming the far greatest Part of Mankind to be incapable of making a due Use of their Reason: That they must depend upon others, to know what is right or wrong; and in the Matter of Duty and Sin be determin'd by another's Judgment, not their own: For tho' they have Reason, yet not being able, through the Exercise of it, to arrive at Certainty, the safest Method of preserving themselves from Error and Mistake, is to submit to Authority, and rely on Information.

But he who has enquired with the greatest Accuracy into this Subject, and given such Reasons against admitting these Ideas, as yet remain (and I believe ever will) unanswered, is the great Mr. *Locke*, in the Beginning of his *Essay upon Human Understanding*, which every one may consult that is desirous of a

thorough Satisfaction in this Point. I shall only mention the Heads of some of his Arguments.

The Falseness of such Supposition, *he says*, sufficiently appears, by shewing how Men may arrive at Certainty without any such original Notions or Principles, it being unreasonable to attribute several Truths to the Impressions of Nature and innate Characters, when we may observe in ourselves Faculties fit to attain as certain and easy Knowledge of them, as if they were originally imprinted on the Mind. *He observes*, That the Argument drawn from *Universal Consent*, on which it principally is founded, has this Misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact, that there were certain Truths wherein all Mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if any other way can be shewn how Men may come to that universal Agreement in the Things they do consent in, which he presumes may be done. But the worst is, this Argument seems a Demonstration, that there are no such innate speculative Principles, because there are none to which Mankind give an universal Consent; for if Children and Idiots have not the least Apprehension or Thought of them, it destroys that universal Consent, which must needs be the necessary Concomitant of all innate Truths; it being a Contradiction to say there are Truths imprinted on the Soul, which it perceives or understands not: For if they are not Notions naturally imprinted, how can they be innate? and if they are imprinted, how can they be unknown? and if known, they must be conscious of them; otherwise Truths may be imprinted on the Mind, which it never did, nor ever shall know, which is to make this Impression nothing. Or if the Capacity of Knowing be the natural Impression contended for, then all the Truths a Man ever comes to know will be innate, and it is only an improper way of affirming what no one denies, that the  
Mind

Mind is capable of knowing several things; the Capacity innate, the Knowledge acquired. But if Truths can be imprinted on the Mind without being perceived, or in the Understanding, and not be understood, it is all one as to say, any thing is, and is not, in the Mind or Understanding. Nor will answering, that Men know and assent to them when they come to the Use of Reason; prove them innate; because then whatever Reason certainly discovered, would equally be so: And whatever general Truths require the Use of Reason for the Discovery of them, cannot be innate; for Reason is the Faculty of deducing unknown Truths from Principles or Propositions already known, and can amount to no more than this, that they are never known or taken notice of before the Use of Reason; but whether they may be assented to after, or when, is uncertain: And so may all other knowable Truths, and consequently by this Note none can be proved innate. Nor is the Time of coming to the Use of Reason, the precise Time when they are first taken notice of; but to assent to them is the Exercise of Reason, and therefore the Supposition false. Nor will their being assented to, as soon as proposed, prove them to be such; it may be a Mark of Self-Evidence, when Men, upon first hearing and understanding the Terms, assent unto them, as that one and two are equal to three, &c. which nevertheless are not innate; or if such Assent be a Mark of it, we must allow Millions of Propositions in the Sciences to be so, as many as Men have distinct Ideas of, or can make Propositions wherein different Ideas are denied of one another. The most universal Maxims not being known till they are proposed, proves them not to be innate. Nor is there a Proposition whose Terms or Ideas were either of them innate, and consequently nothing in any Proposition that is so. When Children are capable of Thought, Knowledge, and Assent, yet are they ignorant of the most general Truths, which they

could not be, if Nature had imprinted any such; it being not imaginable that they should perceive the Impression from Things without, and be at the same time ignorant of those Characters which Nature itself has taken care to stamp within. Can they receive, and assent to adventitious Notions, and be ignorant of those which are supposed woven into the very Principle of their Beings, and imprinted there in indelible Characters, to be the Foundation and Guide of all their acquired Knowledge and future Reasonings? This would make Nature take pains to no purpose, or at least to write very ill, since its Characters could not be read by those Eyes, which saw other things very well. It being impossible that any Truth which is innate, should be unknown to one who knows any thing else; since if they are innate Truths, they must be inward Thoughts, there being nothing a Truth in the Mind which it has never thought on. Whereby it is evident, if there be any innate Truths, they must be necessarily the first that appear there, the first of any thought on. Nor can such general Maxims be allowed innate, because if these Characters were native and original Impressions, they should appear fairest and clearest in those Persons, in whom yet we find no Footsteps of them: For Children and illiterate People being of all others the least corrupted by Custom or borrowed Opinions, and nothing superinduced to confound those Characters Nature had written, one might reasonably imagine that in their Minds those innate Notions should lie open fairly to every one's View, as 'tis certain the Thoughts of Children do. It might very well be expected, that these Principles should be known to Naturals, for being (as is supposed) stamped immediately on the Soul, they can have no Dependence on the Constitution, or Organs of the Body, the only confessed Difference between them and others. And all these native Beams of Light should, in those who have no Arts of Concealment, shine out in their full Lustre,

Lustre, and leave us in no more Doubt of their being there, than we are of their Love of Pleasure and Abhorrence of Pain. And yet there are no general Maxims, no universal Principles of Knowledge, to be found in the Thoughts of Children, or any Impressions of them on the Minds of Naturals.

And if speculative Principles have not an actual universal Consent from all Mankind, it is much more visible concerning practical Principles, there being no Instance of any one moral Rule which can pretend to so general and ready an Assent, as the former. The Reasoning and Exercise of the Mind to discover the Certainty of moral Principles, the Ignorance wherein many are of them, and the Slowness of Assent wherewith others receive them, are manifest Proofs of their not being native Impressions, or such as offer themselves to View without searching. Nor are there any moral Principles wherein all agree; no practical Truth universally received without doubt, or being questioned, not even the most extensive Principle of Justice and keeping Contracts. And if it be said, that the tacit Assent of their Minds agrees to what their Practice contradicts, it is answered, that Actions are the best Interpreters of Thoughts: And if some Men have questioned and denied these Principles, it is impossible to establish an universal Consent; and if practical Principles terminate not in Operation, and produce Conformity of Action, they are in vain distinguished from speculative Maxims; for if there were certain Characters imprinted by Nature on the Understanding to regulate our Practice, we could not but perceive them constantly operate in us, as we do those others on the Will and Appetite, which never cease to be the constant Springs and Motives of all our Actions, to which we perpetually feel them strongly impelling us.

Ano-

Another Argument is, that all moral Rules want a Proof; nor can one be proposed, whereof a Man may not justly demand a Reason; for their Truth plainly depends upon some antecedent to them, and from which they must be deduced; which could not be, if either they were innate, or so much as self-evident, which every innate Principle must needs be, and not need any Proof to ascertain its Truth, nor want any Reason to gain it Approbation. And if a Reason be asked of any the most undeniable Rule in Morality, Men will give it according to the different Sorts of Happiness they have a Prospect of, or propose to themselves: An ancient Philosopher would give one Reason, a Christian another, an Atheist a third: And hence naturally flows the great Variety of Opinions concerning moral Rules, which could not be, if they were imprinted on our Minds immediately by the Hand of God.

And if we judge of Mens Thoughts by their Actions, we shall find they have no such full Persuasion of the Certainty or Obligation of these Rules. Even the great Principle of Morality, to do as one would be done to, is more commended than practised. If Conscience be urged as checking us for such Breaches; and so the internal Obligation and Establishment of the Rule preserved; It is answer'd, that Men may, by the same way that they come to the Knowledge of other things, come to assent to several moral Rules, and be convinced of their Obligation, without being written on their Hearts; from Education, Company, and Customs of their Country; which Persuasion howsoever got, will serve to set Conscience on work, which is nothing else but our own Opinion or Judgment of the moral Rectitude or Pravity of our own Actions. How then can Men transgress these moral Rules with Confidence and Serenity, were they innate and stamp'd upon their Minds?

Minds? View but a Christian Army at the sacking of a Town, and see what Observation or Sense of moral Principles, or what Touch of Conscience for all the Outrages they do: Robberies, Murders, Rapes, are the Sports of Men set at Liberty from Punishment and Censure. The greatest Enormities and Inhumanities have been practised by many Nations without Remorse, without being scrupled or condemned: Where then are these innate Principles of Chastity, Justice, and Piety, or where that Universal Consent that assures us there are such inbred Rules? And if Conscience be a Proof of innate Principles, Contraries may be innate, since some Men with the same bent of Conscience prosecute what others avoid, and have Remorse for doing or omitting what others think they merit by: That there is scarce a Principle of Morality to be named, or Rule of Virtue thought on, which is not slighted and condemned by whole Societies of Men, governed by practical Opinions, quite opposite to others.

Whatever practical Principle is innate, cannot but be known to every one, to be just and good, because naturally imprinted on their Minds. It is therefore little less than a Contradiction, it is impossible, that whole Nations of Men should publicly renounce, what every one of them certainly and infallibly knew to be a Law; to be just, and right, and good; and what all Men they had to do with, must contemn and abhor them for: So that whatever practical Rule is, in any Place, generally and with allowance broken, cannot be supposed innate, because it is not a Rule or Principle, that does upon all Occasions excite and direct the Actions of Men; nor is it a Truth naturally imprinted as a Duty, without supposing the Ideas of God, Obligation, Punishment, and a Life after this, to be innate; which they must all be, if any Thing as a Duty be so; which they certainly are not;

not; it being impossible that whole Nations should serenely, without Shame or Fear, break a Rule, which they could not but evidently know that God had set up, and would certainly punish the Breach of. But the Difference among Men, in their practical Principles, utterly takes away this Mark of general Assent, to find out any moral Rule by: They who maintain them, tell us not which they are; and were there any such, there would be no need to teach them: such Propositions stamped on the Mind would be easily distinguished from other Truths, and nothing could be more easy to know, what, and how many they were. For were there any Difference, it would plainly evidence there are none.

Lord *Herbert* has ventured to give a Catalogue of them, but there are numberless Propositions, that even by his own Rules have as just a Pretence to such an Original, as the five he mentions; nor in each of them are all his Marks of common Notions to be found. In some the Words are uncertain in their Signification, and the Things they stand for, difficult to be known, and therefore an uncertain Rule for the Conduct of Life, and unfit to be assigned as an innate practical Principle. Nor indeed can any be imagined, or be of Use, unless the particular Measures and Bounds of all Virtues and Vices were engraven on Mens Minds also, which no one pretends to; and that God should engrave Principles in Words of uncertain Signification, does not seem possible. Nor will it be of any Moment to say, that by Education, Custom, and general Opinion, they may be darkned, and at last quite worn out of the Minds of Men. For this Assertion quite takes away the Argument of Universal Assent. Nor is it to be reconciled, that there should be some Principles, which all Men do acknowledge and agree in; yet none of those Principles, which are not by depraved



proved Custom and an ill Education blotted out: which is to say that all Men admit, yet many deny and dissent from them. And if they are capable of being altered or lost, we shall be as much in the Dark and Uncertainty as if there were no such Thing at all; it being all one to have no Rule, and one that will warp every way; and amongst various and contrary Rules, not to know which is right.

Yet there are many Opinions received by different Men, as unquestionable Principles, whose Truth is never doubted, which from their Absurdity, and Opposition to each other, it is impossible should be true. Nor is it wonderful, if we consider with what Veneration Men generally submit to Notions, however false or superstitious, which they first entertained and have always been educated in, and being what they can find in themselves no Original of, conclude them innate, the Impress of God and Nature. And as most Men have some revered Principles, on which they found their Reasonings, so there are few, who are not exposed by their Ignorance, Laziness, Education, or Precipitancy to take them upon Trust. Many have neither Leisure, Parts nor Will, to examine seriously their own Tenets, much less dare they venture to dissent from the received Opinions of their Country or Party; and above all will be afraid to question those Principles, which they think are Standards set up by God in their Minds, to be the Rule and Touchstone of all other Opinions.

By these means it comes to pass that Men worship the Idols they have set up in their Minds, grow fond of the Notions they have been long acquainted with; stamp the Characters of Divinity upon Absurdities and Errors, and think no Gods but their own are to be worshipped. Wanting Time or true Helps to penetrate into the Principles of Knowledge, and trace Truth to its Fountain and Original, they take  
up

up with borrowed Principles, which never venturing to examine, they may take any Absurdity for an innate Principle, and (by long poring on the same Objects) the Monsters lodged in either Brain, for the Images of the Deity.

Nor can there be any Principles innate, except the Ideas which make up those Truths be innate also; for where the Ideas themselves are not, there can be no Knowledge or Assent, no mental or verbal Propositions about them. And it is certain these are not born with Children, therefore there was a time, when the Mind was without them, and the Knowledge of such Propositions could not be born with us. One may perceive how Ideas come gradually into their Minds, and they get no more, nor any other, than what Experience, and the Observation of Things that come in their way, furnish them with. If there be any innate Principle, this is certainly one, that it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be: Yet the Ideas of Impossibility and Identity are so remote from the Thoughts of Infancy and Childhood, that many grown Persons will, upon Examination, be found to want them. And if such Ideas be a native Impression, they will be so clear and distinct, as to be universally known, and naturally agreed on, or they cannot be the Subject of universal and undoubted Truths, but will be the unavoidable Occasion of perpetual Uncertainty.

That God is to be worshipped, is without doubt as great a Truth as can enter into the Mind of Man, and deserves the first Place among all practical Principles; yet it can by no means be thought Innate, unless the Ideas of God and Worship be Innate. That the Idea, the Term Worship stands for, is not, in the Understanding of Children, a Character stamped on the Mind in its first Original, will be easily granted by any one, that considers

ders how few grown Men have a clear and distinct Notion of it. And there cannot be any thing more ridiculous, than to say, that Children have this practical Principle innate, and yet know not what that Worship is, which is their Duty.

But if any Idea can be imagin'd innate, the Idea of God may, of all others, for many Reasons be thought so, since it is hard to conceive, how there should be innate moral Principles without an innate Idea of a Deity. Without a Notion of a Law-maker, it is impossible to have a Notion of a Law, and an Obligation to observe it: Yet there always have been and still are Persons and Nations who have no Notion of a God, no Religion. Or had all Mankind every where the Notion of a God, it would not from thence follow, that the Idea of him was innate: For tho' no Nation were to be found, without a Name and some few dark Notions of him, yet that would not prove them to be natural Impressions on the Mind, no more than the Names of Fire or the Sun, do prove the Ideas they stand for to be innate, because the Names of these things and the Ideas of them are so universally receiv'd and known amongst Mankind: Since the Notion of a God might be otherways discovered, and the Suitableness thereof to the Principles of common Reason; and the Interest Men will always have to mention it often, must necessarily spread it far and wide, and continue it down to all Generations. But if the general Acknowledgment of it be sufficient to prove the Idea innate, it will also prove the Idea of Fire to be so, since there is not a Person in the World, who has a Notion of God, who has not also the Idea of Fire. If it be urged that it is suitable to the Goodness of God that all Men should have an Idea of him, and therefore it is naturally imprinted, the Argument will prove too much. For if we may conclude that God hath done

done for Men, all that Men shall judge best for them, it will follow, that he has not only imprint-ed an Idea of himself, but all that Men ought to know or believe of him; all that they ought to do in Obedience to his Will, and that he hath given them a Will and Affections conformable to it. This is better for Men, than that they should in the dark grope after Knowledge; as *St. Paul* tells us, all Nations did after God, *Acts* xvii. 27. than that their Wills should clash with their Understanding, and their Appetites cross their Duty. But the Goodness of God hath not been wanting to Man, since he hath furnish'd him with other means to attain the Knowledge of him, and the things that concern him. And can it be thought that the Ideas Men have of God, are the Characters and Marks of himself, engraven in their Minds by his own Finger; when we see that in the same Country under one and the same Name, Men have far different, nay often contrary and inconsistent Ideas and Conceptions of him? Their agreeing in a Name or Sound, will prove no more, than that God imprinted on the Minds of all Men, speaking the same Language, a Name for himself, but not any Idea, since those People who agreed in the Name, had at the same time far different Apprehensions about the thing signified, which is an infallible Evidence of their Ignorance, and that they had no true Notion of him. If on the whole the Idea of God be not innate, there can scarce any other be found, that can pretend to it. And our Minds being at first void of that Idea, which we are most concern'd to have, is a strong Presumption that it must be so of all others.

II. Some, and those very wise Men, to whose Judgment I pay the greatest deference, make the Instincts another Inlet of Knowledge to the Mind of Man, which I must confess my self unable to apprehend;

prehend; and beg leave to dissent from them for the following Reasons.

*First*, Because the Instincts, or those inward Motions and Propensions we find within us, are so engrafted in the Nature of Man, that whatever Notion or Idea they convey of themselves, it must be Innate, and reduce us to acknowledge what is on all hands confess'd to be unphilosophical and absurd.

*Secondly*, The Appetites, such as Hunger or Thirst, Desire or Aversion, are only certain Modifications, Motions, or Impulse of Matter and Spirit, which Impulse we feel, but do not conceive nor can form any Idea of it. And whatever Uneasiness they create, it seems confin'd to the Ideas of those Objects which excite it, as Hunger is a Sense of the Want of Meat, and Thirst of Drink, &c. And all Propensions to alleviate them are confined to the Ideas of those things which the Imagination supposes would give the most immediate Relief. So of Aversions or Natural Antipathies, I cannot conceive any Idea of them, till some one will delineate the Picture he has in his Mind, at starting or fainting on the Sight of a Cat, or a Piece of Cheese, and shew it to be different from the Ideas of those very Objects. Besides, the Instincts are altogether involuntary, no way depending on the Will, nor have any Relation to the rational Faculties, but wholly to the Animal ones. No Reflexion can excite or abate them; it is impossible for a full Stomach to imagine itself fasting; and whether full or fasting, there is no Addition, Diminution, or Alteration, made to the pure Intellect.

*Thirdly*, If we join the Passions with Instincts, they are no more than the Effect of a corrupted Nature; Commotions raised in the Mind from a violent Agitation of the Blood and Animal Spirits, what the Philosophers called an irrational and preternatural Motion of the Soul,  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$   $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta\varsigma$   
κίνησις

κίνησις ἢ παρὰ φύσιν : And by Cicero, *Perturbatio, Commo:io animi, Appetitus vehementior, &c.* And so far from being an Inlet to Reason, that they blind and shut it up, pervert and disturb its Operations, but never regulate them; and in the same Degrees that any Person is subject to them, so far is he deprived of Reason.

*Fourthly*, Passions and Instincts, tho' they are the great Law of the Brute-Creation, for preserving their Existence, and continuing their Species, which at all times and without varying they observe and pursue, as the greatest Direction to the End of their Beings; and whatever Rationality they have, it never resists or perverts them: Yet in Man it is far otherwise, they disturb his Freedom, bias his Will, distract his Reason, mislead his Affections; and are the Cause of all moral Evil, either choosing Means which have no Relation to his End, or are destructive of it. And tho' to correct and keep them within proper Bounds and Regulation, affords an ample Field for Reason to exert it self, and is the proper Notion of Ethics or Morality; and in Societies has occasioned so many Laws to restrain their Licentiousness, and prevent the Disorders which proceed from them; yet they are no constituent Parts of Knowledge any more than Robbers or Pirates, against whom we take proper Caution to defend Ourselves. And so far from being an Inlet to Wisdom, that they are the Conveyors of Ignorance and Error to the Mind, as they are the greatest Cause of all that Sin and Misery which overspreads the World.

*Fifthly*, An Idea must be conformable to some real Existence; but we are entirely ignorant of the Essence, Modes, Powers or Subsistence of Instincts or Passions; and can no more describe the Instincts in Man, than we can that of the Needle to the Loadstone; therefore no Idea can have any Conformity

formity to them. A Tree has a natural Power or Instinct to grow upwards, and a Stone to fall downwards; we know it is their Nature, the Will of him that form'd them; but what that Nature is, we cannot in the least declare. And if no Object is conveyed by them to the Intellect, no Materials, Ideas or Notions, added to the Imagination, they cannot be a Duct or Inlet to the Mind; but a Man would be as wise without, as with them.

That they are not a Canal for any clear immediate Ideas, appears from the numberless Definitions or rather Descriptions of them, no two Persons agreeing in their Manner, Causes, Appearances, or Effects; which could not happen, if any certain determinate Ideas were affix'd to them. No one is able to inform another, what Modifications produce, or what Sensations accompany them. He knows and feels there is an inward Commotion (perhaps of the Blood and animal Spirits) but he cannot by any Notes or Marks frame a distinct Conception of their Appearance or Existence in the Mind, any further than as they are compounded of Ideas from such sensible things as excite them, in Desire or Aversion, in Love, Hatred, Fear, &c.

The Soul operates upon the Body, and so do certain Objects on the Imagination, but they are too remote and subtle for Apprehension. We cannot form a Thought or Notion of them, nor how such Force, Impulse or Motion acts upon the Mind. They are amongst those hidden Causes, to which, as being indiscernible, we cannot affix any Ideas; nor are they to be collected from the Effects, which vary according to the Temperament and Constitution of Bodies. As for Instance, a guilty Fear produces in some Tremblings, in others Faintings, in one a Redness, and in another a Paleness; and consequently there cannot be any immediate original standing Pattern or Idea of them.

Upon the whole, Instincts are Natural, but what Man, as a rational or moral Agent, has no clear Discernment of, nor Dominion over. He may correct, but can neither destroy, nor prevent them: They rise up without giving us notice, and subside not, when, or how we please, as depending on neither of our Superior Faculties, the Reason or the Will; but are merely animal Appetites or Inclinations, as distinct from the Intellect, as the Body is from the Soul. The less a Man has of them, the better and wiser is he; nor can they in any explicit Sense be a Conduit to Truth, or Inlet of real Knowledge to the Understanding; so the more he has of them, the nearer is he to the Beast, and the further removed from all the intellectual Parts of Nature.

III. The great Inlet of Knowledge to the Mind, is by the Senses: Either by the direct Impression of external Objects, when the Ideas conveyed are immediate and adequate, so that the Mind knows the whole of them: Or mediately, by the Intervention of some other Agent, who instructs it in the Knowledge of those Beings and Things, which are invisible, immaterial, and not cognisable by the Senses. Even this Information the Mind receives by the help of the Senses, yet cannot form any Idea of them (for because of their Remoteness, Subtily, and Undiscernibleness, it cannot know them adequately, or in the whole) but only some Thought, Notion, or Conception of them. And these are the only natural Means of coming at Knowledge; for Illumination is supernatural, when the Mind is taught by an immediate Act or Communication of God himself, without any Inlet or Use of the Senses. But by Instruction she learns the Knowledge of divine abstracted Subjects, with the help of Language, whereby the Thoughts of one Mind already informed of them, are communicated,



nicated, through the Canal or Inlet of the Senses, to another Mind.

For if the Mind has no innate Knowledge, or Original Impressions stamped upon it, but is as white Paper without any Characters wrote thereon; then all the Objects it becomes acquainted with, must be adventitious and extrinsecal, and there can be no natural Inlet for them, but through the Senses. So that all its Notions or Ideas, whatever it perceives, thinks of, or is employed about, that is, all its Materials of Reason and Understanding, are conveyed to the Intellect through or by their Mediation. Nor can it possibly be furnished with them any other way (except by Inspiration, which is supernatural and miraculous) but would always remain a perfect Blank; as the Soul in a Body originally deprived of all its Senses, must necessarily be.

Nor is this a modern Supposition, but the common Doctrine of the Ancients. *Aristotle*, that Prince among Philosophers, says, the Mind without the Senses is ὡσπερ γραμματεῖον ᾧ μηδὲν ὑπάρχει ἐνδελεχέα γεγραμμένον, like a Tablet on which nothing is yet wrote, but capable of having all things written; which receptive Power is declared by the addition of the word ἐνδελεχέα: and he elsewhere asserts, that he who is deprived of any Sense, must necessarily want the Knowledge of some things. So *Epicurus*, πᾶς ἂν λόγος ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἤρτηται, all Reason has its beginning, or is taken, from the Senses. And *Strabo*, ἡ δὲ δίανοια ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν συντίθησι τὰ νοητὰ, the Understanding forms all its Notions from what the Senses offer. *Cicero* is full of this Doctrine, *Quicquid animo cernimus, id omne oritur à sensibus*: That whatever we discern in the Mind, took its Rise from the Senses. And speaking of Reason with its different Operations, which alone render us more excellent than Brutes, *nam & sensibus eadem*

De Anima  
l. 3. c. 4.

Apud  
Lae. t.

L. 2. p.  
117. c.

De fin. 1.  
1. n. 19.

Vid. Acad.  
Q. 1. 4.

n. 7, 10,  
12.

De Leg.  
omnia l. 1. n. 10.

*omnia comprehenduntur*, all these things are comprehended from the Senses. So again at the End of his *Timæus*, he ascribes the Knowledge of the most excellent Things in Wisdom and Philosophy, of Nature and the Gods, to be owing to our Senses. *Rerum enim optimarum cognitiones nobis oculi attulerunt*. And among the elder Christians, to mention no more, *Lactantius* has many Expressions to this Purpose. *Scientia non est intus in nobis, sed ad nos extrinsecus venit*. Knowledge is not from within our selves, but derived to us from without: which can be only through the Senses.

L 6. P.  
514.

For (as a learned Author argues) our Senses, though common to us with Brutes, are the only Source and Inlet of those Ideas, which are the entire Ground-work of all our Knowledge both Human and Divine. Without Ideas of some sort or other, we could have no Knowledge at all; for to know a thing is to have some Representation of it in the Mind; but we cannot think, nor be conscious of thinking, till we have some Idea or Semblance of an Object to think upon; and without our Senses we could not have one Internal Idea or Semblance of any thing without us. So that we must lay down that Maxim of the Schools as universally true, without any Restriction or Limitation; *Nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuit in sensu*.

The Imagination is a common Store-house and Receptacle of all those Images, which are transmitted through the Senses; and till this is furnished in some degree, the Soul, while it is in the Body, is a still, unactive Principle; and then only begins to operate, and first exert it self, when it is supplied by Sensation with Materials to work upon. These are the sole Foundation on which we raise all our whole Superstructure of Knowledge; and all the Discoveries we can make in things  
temporal

temporal or spiritual, together with the most refined Notions of them in the Mind of Man, take their Rise originally from Sensation.

At our Birth the Imagination is entirely a *Tabula rasa*, or perfect Blank, without any Materials either for a simple View, or any other Operation of the Intellect. We are not furnished with any Innate Ideas of things material, or immaterial; nor are we endued with a Faculty or Disposition of forming purely Intellectual Ideas or Conceptions independent of all Sensation: Much less has the human Soul a Power of raising up to it self Ideas out of nothing, which is a kind of Creation; or of attaining any first Principles exclusive of all Illation, or consequential Deduction from Ideas of material Objects; without which the Mind of Man, during its Union with the Body, could not have arrived even to a Consciousness of its own Operations or Existence.

Daily Experience shews us, that as far as Persons are from their first Infancy deprived of any of their Senses, they are so far imperfect in their Intellectuals. What a vast Degree of Knowledge do we find cut off together with that one Sense of Hearing? Take away the Sight likewise, and consider how limited and confined the Operations of the Intellect must be. If after this you remove from a Man all Taste and Smelling, and if he hath no Ideas left for the Mind to work upon but those of his Feeling; how far would he differ from a Sensitive Plant? The Mind in such Case would not be able to infer the bare Existence of any thing external to it, but what was felt; and if it were possible for the Man to have animal Life without Feeling, he would be as utterly void of Knowledge, as one in a Swoon or Apoplectick Fit.

For there can be no Ideas in the Mind, before Sensation, or the Senses have conveyed them into

it, there being no other Intercourse or Communication betwixt the Object and the Faculty. And Thought and Reason gradually improve, or the Mind thinks more, as it has Matter to think on. But whilst the Spirit is in Conjunction with the Body, if we remove from it all Ideas of Sensation, the whole Superstructure of Knowledge falls to the ground. For it is absurd to say, either that the pure Intellect can supply it self with Ideas; or that it can think, when it has nothing to think of.

L. 2. c. 1. This is also what Mr. *Locke* affirms on the same  
 §. 2. Subject: that the Mind of Man has all its endless and various Materials of Reason and Knowledge from Experience: In that all our Knowledge is founded, and from that it originally derives it self; which is certainly true, as our Observation is employed about external, sensible Objects. But what he adds to these of Ideas of Reflexion, as if any new Stock of Materials or Ideas were produced in the Imagination by its own Actings or Operations, is contrary to Experience, to Reason, and Nature; it being impossible that the Mind should come at the Knowledge, Perception, Notion, or Idea of any Being that has a real Existence, but through the Mediation of the Senses.

The Mind has indeed a native Power of Self-Reflexion and internal Operation: Like the Stomach it can receive Food, and digest it; but it must be given to it, it cannot feed it self. No more can the Mind, by any Power it has, raise or create new Objects; it can remember, compare, divide and compound what it has received; but not make the least Addition thereto. It can work upon, transpose and view them in different Lights, the better to form its Judgment; but their Nature is not alter'd, they are still the same. View, review, and divide Ideas of Sensation a thousand times over, and they will after all be no more than mere Ideas of Sensation.

sation. No Magick of Reflexion or Abstraction can make Invisibles out of Visibles, or form immaterial Substances out of material ones; any more than a Chymist can extract Gold from Mud, or a Statuary cut a marble Image out of Wood. The Statues of *Phidias* might be the most beautiful in the World, but he made them of the same Ingredients as others did, and which his Art could not alter. And if their Form was Divine, though he had not a *Jupiter* or *Minerva* to carve them by; yet was it no Creature of his own making, nor would his Imagination have directed his Hands, if it had not received those Impressions from the different Objects he had before been conversant with. The Acts of the Mind are as regular and plain, as of any other Agent; and if we would but attend to them, there could be no need of having recourse to Miracles for any Article of Knowledge we find it in the Possession of; it is easy to know how we came by it. But to say it makes Ideas, or contains what it never received, is just as preternatural, and as true, as that the Artificer makes the Materials he builds a House with; first produces, and then puts them together.

The Imagination is only a capacious Store-Room, capable to receive a vast quantity and variety of Goods of every kind and from every place; but is quite empty till they are brought into it; the Merchant then ranges them in their several Classes and Orders, as is most convenient for Use; but cannot by any Alteration, Change, or Mixture increase his Stock, or produce a Substance that was never conveyed thither. The Intellect does the same, it ranges its Ideas in their several Cells, so as to remember where to have recourse to them, but by no Operation of its own can add a fresh Stock or Supply; this, the Senses and no other Vehicle can bring. For to say, the Mind can  
furnish

furnish itself with Ideas, is the same Absurdity, as for Merchandise to grow up in the Store, or Furniture in a House without coming in at the Doors or Windows. Nothing can be taken out of the Imagination, that was not first extrinsically lodged there; all that the Intellect can do, is to sort its Materials, and work some of them (as a Carver may the same Block) into a great Variety of Forms, according to the Perfection of its Skill. But the Materials are just the same, no way essentially alter'd, though the Form is; nor by any Alembick or Art can it distil Spirit from Body, or extract Incorporeity from what is Corporeal.

For the Truth of this we need only appeal to every one's Experience; Let him examine his Thoughts, and try whether he has any original Ideas, that are not the Objects of his Senses. Notwithstanding all he has heard of Immateriality, let him, if he is able, abstract from all Sensation or Impression of material Objects, look inward, and see if he can find one simple Idea independent of it, for the Mind to exercise any of its Operations upon. It is impossible; or if any such Instance is pretended to be offered, it will be easy to shew the necessary Connexion it hath with Sensation, and the Dependence it has upon it.

This, I say, will plainly appear to any one that will try the utmost Extent of his Thought, whether the most lively Imagination can form an Idea of any thing, but upon the pre-existent ones of Sensation: In the most fictitious Ideas, the *Entia Rationis*, which have no Existence but in the Understanding, though the Mind can compound many Ideas together, and so frame a Being which really never was in Nature; yet there are no new Ideas here, tho' the Composition be so; for if they had not been all separately represented before, it could not have joined them together in its Apprehension.

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The Series is very natural and easy; we cannot know a thing without perceiving it, nor perceive it but by some Idea or Resemblance of it; nor can the Mind have any Representation of Objects without it, but through the Senses: Not of human ones, but by Impressions made on them; nor of divine ones, but by some Similitude or Correspondence with them, which Representations are conveyed to it by Instruction through the Senses: But in no sense can the Intellect set up a Mint of its own, for the coining of new Ideas.

It has been presumed, and with great Justice, that the Power of raising up to itself Ideas, without the Presence or Impression of any Object whatsoever, is perhaps a Privilege of the Divine Intellect alone; answerable to the almighty Power of Creation, or producing a Thing out of Nothing. But the Power of the Mind in our little World, is much the same with that of Man in the greater World. It is as impossible for it to raise up to itself any simple Idea entirely new and independent of all Sensation, as it is for a Man to add one Particle to the common Mass of Matter: Though it must be confessed to have a wonderful Sagacity in working upon what it finds already stored up in the Imagination.

As the Imagination then is the Store-house, so are the Senses the only Window, Door, or Inlet, whereby any Light or Furniture is admitted into it; and if these were from the first stopped up and closed, it would for ever remain a dark and empty Void: Yet when we come to examine what is contained in it, we shall find a most essential Difference between the Notices which are lodged there. If we survey the whole System of Beings, we may divide them into two kinds, Material and Immaterial, for there is no middle Species. Of the first of these, which are the direct Objects of Sensation, we may behold

behold full and exact Representations in the Mind, like a finished Picture, boldly and strongly drawn, and livelily representing the Thing intended to be described. Because we have a direct immediate Perception of them, the Figure in the Mind is adequate, and consentaneous to the Object without, and the Mind has an Idea of it.

But of immaterial Things we have only a faint languid Conception, a few Out-lines in a Picture, but no full or proper Representation of them. And the Reason is, because they are too big for our Mind, it could not contain them; and therefore in Proportion to our Capacities, such Information of their Essence, Nature and Properties is conveyed to us, as our Nature can bear, or as is sufficient for our present State; not so as to yield us any clear Perception of them, but describing them by Metaphor, Analogy and some Similitude to Objects better known to us. Whence it is not possible for us to raise an Idea, but only an inadequate Thought or Notion of them. And in the most refined exalted parts of Knowledge we are forced to make up these abstracted Notions from sensible Things (having no other Materials to compose them of) and whoever will resolve his most complex Thoughts of spiritual Things into simple Ideas, will find them to terminate in those, and no other, which at first took their Rise from sensible Objects. By which Rule we may easily know of what kind the Notices in the Intellect are; and then how we came by them, whether from Sensation or Instruction.

And the not sufficiently attending to this Distinction has, I am persuaded, been the chief Ground of all Confusion and Error in our Reasonings upon this Subject; and proved a fatal Mistake to Mr. *Locke* in founding the sublimest Parts of Knowledge upon Ideas of Reflexion, or the Operations of the Mind, which can neither give Ideas of themselves,



felves, nor of any other Objects. For there can be no Ideas but of sensible things; nothing is properly an Idea, but what stands in the Mind for an adequate Image or Representation of something which is not in it; the Thing must be without us; and because it cannot itself enter, the Likeness of it only is conveyed through the Senses to the Imagination.

The Term Idea, therefore, can never be applied to the Operations of the Mind, as we cannot properly speaking have any Idea of them; we cannot define what Thinking or Willing are, we know not their Power or Nature, nor can we form any distinct Idea of them, but only know that they are the Actings or Workings of the Intellect upon Ideas, first lodged in the Imagination for that Purpose, and necessarily to be considered as antecedent to any such Operations; and without them the Mind could not have operated at all, nor have exerted one Act of Thinking, without being provided with some of these to think upon; nor even have had a Consciousness of it self, or of its own Being. For though we are certain that the Mind does exert its Operations upon sensible Objects, yet we cannot frame to our selves the least Idea or Resemblance of them, abstractedly from those Objects on which they operate.

And this I observe, to shew there can be no weight in the Objection from the Logick of *Port-Royal* and others against this general Proposition, that all other Ideas and Knowledge are derived from and by the Senses. Their Argument runs thus: There is nothing that we conceive more distinctly than our Thought itself, nor any Proposition more clear than this; *I think, therefore I am.* Now we could have no Certainty of this Proposition, if we did not conceive distinctly what it is to be, and what it is to think. Therefore we have in us  
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*no  
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the Ideas of being and thinking, which neither entered into our Minds by, nor do in any manner derive their Origin from the Senses.

But these Gentlemen are forced to add, " That we must not be asked to explain these Terms, because they are of the Number of those which are so well understood by all the World, that endeavouring to explain them would render them obscure." But this is a mere Fallacy, for if it represents Nothing, it is no Idea: If it has the Semblance of any Thing, it may be explained. We know that we do think, *i. e.* are conscious of such Operation in the Mind, but are so far from having any distinct Conception, any direct or original Idea of this or any other Operation in the Mind, that all the Ideas or Notions we can form of its Manner of Acting, and the Expressions we use for it, are borrowed from Sensation. It is no more than a natural Power in the Soul, and what no waking Man can prevent, any more than he can the Beating of the Heart, or Circulation of the Blood, which depend not on Ideas, but are necessary involuntary Motions; and the Idea of Thinking adds to a Man's Knowledge just as much as the Idea of Walking does to a Journey. But we have already seen, that without Ideas of Sensation we could not think at all; and therefore have no Conception of Existence, either of Ourselves, or any other Being.

Upon the whole, we cannot with the least Propriety say we have an Idea of any Thing but what is sensible or material, because nothing else can be wholly or adequately known. For want of such a distinct and clear View of immaterial or spiritual Objects, we can have no Ideas of them; but our whole Knowledge is confined to Notions and Conceptions, it being impossible for us to apprehend, what their Nature, Powers, Properties, or Figure are.

are. Nor can we frame these very Notions, but by the Help and Representations of sensible Things. As for Instance, when we would think of the Divine Nature, the perfectest Notion we perhaps can frame, is by Ideas of excessive Light and dazzling Splendour, though the most extensive Imagination cannot conceive any thing beyond the Brightness of the Sun. And when we would define or describe God, it is by negative Expressions, such as Infinite, Immaterial, Immortal, &c. of which we have no positive Conception or Idea, but by Analogy to sensible Things, that he is not Finite, not Material, not Mortal, not Comprehensible, &c.

And this may convince us, that they could not take their Rise from the Mind, or any internal Operations or Reflexions, because then the Mind would know them as they are. But it is not possible for it by any Abstractions to frame Ideas of immaterial Beings, without applying those of Sensation to them, which nevertheless have no Relation to or Dependence on them, but are as different as Spirit and Matter, *i. e.* as two Objects in the System of Things possibly can be. It implies a Contradiction to say our Reason can discover a Being, and yet have no Idea or Semblance of it, for that is to discover nothing: Or that we could naturally come at the Knowledge of something whose Perfection, Essence, or Glory, our natural Faculties are not able to bear the most distant Glimpse of.

If it be asked then, How we come by the Knowledge of God, if it is not by internal Reflexions of the Mind on the Ideas of Sensation? The Answer is easy, that it is by Instruction. What was not obvious to the Senses, and therefore could not have entred into the Mind to conceive, That the Author of our Being has revealed and communicated to us, *viz.* a full Assurance of the Existence of invisible Objects, with so much of their Nature, Attributes  
and

and Properties as is sufficient for our present State. So that being never manifested to our Sense or Apprehension, *but in part, as in a Glass darkly*, the loftiest Conceptions we can form of them, fall infinitely short of their real Natures; nor can we raise any Conception of them beyond those Metaphors and Similitudes by which they have been pictured out and resembled to us. When the Eye of the Mind would by the purest Abstraction view the Divine Glory, it is forced to substitute by way of Resemblance, the strongest Light that is known to the Eye of the Body.

This then is the Foundation whereon we are to build all our abstracted Knowledge of invisible immaterial Things. It is from Instruction alone that the Mind takes this flight, advances to remote and sublime Truths, which Sense cannot discern; soars as high as Heaven, and tours in those lofty Speculations, wherein it takes a nearer View of all the Wonders of Eternity: Those Objects of Faith which being not seen, are yet believed; though we have no direct Ideas or clear Perceptions, yet we have sufficient Notices to confirm our Mind in their Existence, our Knowledge in their Beauty and Goodness, our Affections to love and pursue, our Will and Passions to cleave inseparably to them; till in another World the Veil shall be taken away, and we be admitted to that perfect Knowledge, which at present is neither needful nor possible.

Nor is this any Degradation of Man, that he was not placed at the head of Intellectual Beings, able perhaps to contemplate spiritual Truths with a kind of Intuition: Yet was he created perfect in his Order, and endued with all the Faculties suitable to his Condition; as a mortal Creature placed among Things which are seen and temporal: As intended for Immortality, instructed in things not seen and eternal, in order to fix his Hopes on that blessed  
Reward

Reward of being admitted into the City of God, to see clearly and enjoy fully the Glories of the heavenly Kingdom, which is reserved for his final and eternal State. The Ideas of Sense, or the Operations of Reason, were insufficient to teach him the Author, or End of his Being, or the Objects of divine Wisdom. A full View of them was not necessary; therefore God exhibited them in such Degrees, as would best answer the Designs of his Providence, and all the Purposes and Ends of Man: So that in the most excellent Gifts and Graces he has nothing which he did not receive. *Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* But Knowledge is apt to puff a Man up, and make him conceit himself wise above that which is written.

These things no way fall within the Cognisance of Sense or Reason; their most exalted Faculties give us not the least Notion of Subjects above the Orb of Matter, nor could have the remotest View or Discernment of an uncreated Nature, there being no Proportion between the Faculty and the Object, between Finite and Infinite, no Similitude or Likeness whereunto we could compare it; and consequently, no intellectual Chain, or certain Deductions and Conclusions, whereby we could have inferred it, or raised our Minds up to the Throne above. Therefore God let himself down in Condescension to our Infirmities, and manifested those real Natures which were hid from us, those invisible Glories which we could not see and live, by such gradual Revelations as the Wants of Men required, and he in his eternal Wisdom and Justice saw fitting for us; otherwise they had remained for ever unknown and incomprehensible to us; for Man could no more be self-instructed in these Points, than he could be self-created.

The Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, § 3. Prop: says, "That an intelligent Being must have some <sup>1. P. 41.</sup>

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"imme-

Prop. 3. “ immediate Objects of his Understanding, or at least a Capacity of having such ; for if there be no Object of his Intellect, he is intelligent of nothing. He can neither think nor understand. Therefore Man, according to the Growth of his Reason, would have the Objects of Sense for the Objects of his Understanding ; but by no abstracted Contemplation of their Ideas could he discover the Essence, Nature, or Idea of Objects not evident to Sense ;” because, as he adds, “ Those Ideas or Objects will be adequately and truly known to the Mind, whose Ideas they are.” But we can have no adequate Knowledge of supernatural Objects ; therefore we can have no true Idea of them, because we do not perceive them as they are.

Yet has he a Capacity of receiving such, or forming Notions or Conceptions of them, according to the Degrees of Perspicuity whereby they are notified to him ; and as such Notices are more or less distinct and clear, will his Images or Representations of those Originals be. But if they were naturally, or by any demonstrable Inferences or Conclusions could be, the immediate Objects of the Intellect, their Ideas would be truly and adequately known. But we neither have, nor can have, such Ideas of them ; therefore the Originals, neither by Nature nor Illation, are the immediate Objects of human Understanding : And consequently can be so only mediately, through the Senses, by Language and Instruction, which must be by the Intervention of another Agent, who ultimately, in this Case, must be God. And this Rule will hold universally true in all the Parts of Divine Knowledge, whereof we can have no direct Conception or adequate Idea.

That we have no natural Capacities to form an Idea of God, is evident, because we cannot define him, (for what we know, we may define) or put Bounds in our Minds to his Essence ; but for a Finite

to contain an Infinite, is Contradiction and Absurdity. And that we can by no rational Consequences or Illations discover him, is equally certain, because the intermediate Relations between a created Effect and a creative Cause, are no way apparent or discernible by us, as I shall hereafter more largely shew. But in this kind of Proof, the Arguments always looked upon as most clear and demonstrative, are those taken from the Works of God, the Frame, Constitution, Variety, and Order of the Universe. To which I shall only observe at present, that there is no one Chain of Causes and Effects that can lead the Mind from the Contemplation of the Creature to the Knowledge of the Creator. They are Terms infinitely distant, what no created Understanding could unite and bring together; it is an Act of Omnipotence; and he that could prove it, could also perform it.

Let us only hear what the last mentioned excellent Author says on this Subject: “ That both the Begin-  
“ nings and the Ends of Things, the least and the  
“ greatest, all conspire to baffle us; and which way  
“ ever we prosecute our Enquiries, we still fall in with  
“ fresh Subjects of Amazement, and fresh Reasons  
“ to believe that there are indefinitely still more and  
“ more behind, that will for ever escape our eager-  
“ est Pursuits and deepest Penetration. This mighty  
“ Building is not only thus grand, and the Appear-  
“ ances stupendous in it, but the manner in which  
“ things are effected, is commonly unintelligible,  
“ and their Causes too profound for us. There are  
“ indeed many things in Nature which we know,  
“ and some of which we seem to know the Causes:  
“ But, alas! how few are these with respect to the  
“ whole Sum? And the Causes which we assign,  
“ what are they? commonly such as can only be  
“ expressed in general Terms, whilst the Bottoms of  
“ Things remain unfathomable. Such as have

Relig. Nat.  
Delineat.  
p. 81.

“ been collected from Experience, but could scarcely  
 “ be known before-hand by any Arguments *à priori*,  
 “ to be capable of such Effects ; and yet till Causes  
 “ are known after that manner, they are not tho-  
 “ roughly understood. It is impossible for us to  
 “ come at the true Principles of Things. The  
 “ Causes that appear to us, are but Effects of other  
 “ Causes. And as for the Substances themselves  
 “ of all these things, and their internal Constitution,  
 “ they are hid from our Eyes. Our Philosophy  
 “ dwells in the Surface of Nature.”

To argue then upon this Author's Principles :  
 Those Ideas or Objects which are immediate, will  
 be adequately and truly known to the Mind whose  
 Ideas they are ; for Ideas can be no further the  
 Ideas of any Mind, than the Mind has a Percep-  
 tion of them. But the least and the greatest of cre-  
 ated things baffle us, their Reasons escape our eager-  
 est Pursuits and deepest Penetration. The very  
 Substances of things, and much more their internal  
 Constitution are hid from our Eyes : Therefore we  
 can have no Idea or Perception of them (except  
 their outward Bulk, Figure, and some few Proper-  
 ties.) All the Images we frame of them, their Laws,  
 Destination, Power, Contrivance and Wisdom, are  
 but at best false and imperfect Representations, in-  
 capable of transmitting Ideas of Things as they are,  
 and consequently no more than Misrepresentations  
 and Misconceptions of Things.

And if these first Relations or Respects of Things,  
 the nearest to our View, be so unapparent, it will  
 not be possible by the Intuition of any intermediate  
 or more distant Relations, to discover other things  
 with greater Certainty. There is no Certainty, and  
 can be no Demonstration ; for if the first Proposition  
 be imperfect, or doubtful, or false, it will be always  
 so, in all the Instances and Uses to which it is ap-  
 plicable : And therefore impossible, from an imper-  
 fect



fect Idea of the Work, to form a perfect Idea of the Workman.

Neither can the Mind, by any Series of Dependancy, ascend by Effects to the first independent Cause. We indeed know by Revelation, what *Aristotle* and others could not by Reason, *That there is a first efficient Cause of all Things*; and are thence able to form Arguments, which may evince the Absurdity of those who maintain an Eternity of Matter, a Multiplicity of first Movers, or an infinite Series and Progression of Causes; by reducing them to admit either a Progress to Infinity, which is absurd; or grant some first pure Act or Being, which needs no other for its Actuation.

But we cannot ascend *seriatim*, by this Chain of Causes and Effects, to the first Infinite: Because out of the numberless Links there are so few that we can discern, or trace out their Dependence on that above it; because the manner in which things are effected is commonly unintelligible, and their Causes too profound for us. We cannot know a Cause by any Arguments *à priori*, to be capable of rendering such or such Effects, and yet till Causes are known after that manner, they are not thoroughly understood. “ But it is impossible for us to come at the true Principles of Things, or to see into the Oeconomy of the finest Part of Nature. And those which appear Causes to us, are but Effects of other Causes which we discern not: These remain unfathomable, hid from our Eyes, and our deepest Penetration reaches not beyond the Surface, *i. e.* We are ignorant of all the Causes and Dependancies in Nature, and therefore cannot from them ascend through the vast Space and Series of Causes, to the first incomprehensible Causality.”

Id. p. 81.

Nor am I any way apprehensive of the terrifying Objection which some make; That if we can have

no Idea or Notion, Conception or Thought, not some way subject to, or conveyed by Sense; then we cannot have the least Evidence of any thing, but from the same: Therefore there being no corporeal Sense of a Deity, there can be no Evidence at all of his Existence. But this Argument is utterly inconclusive; for no immaterial Beings can be Objects of corporeal Sense; therefore without assistance we could not have known them: And for this very Reason did the Mind Infinite communicate them to our Minds through the Senses, by the artificial Institution and Vehicle of Language. Which is so far from inferring, as Atheists and others, from a wrong stating of the Question, would, that therefore Knowledge is Sense, or Sense the Criterion of Truth; that it concludes directly contrary, that neither Sense nor Reason are the Measure of Truth, but God alone is; and that Reason could not any way discover them, as they are not Objects of the very Intellect, till they are proposed, and it becomes instructed in them.

And this Method of accounting for our coming at Divine Truths, is free from those Embarrassments which so far perplex the Maintainers of a contrary Opinion, that we find the greatest Authors constantly forced to take shelter under what they themselves condemn, *the Absurdity of innate Ideas*. Thus Dr. *Cudworth* expresses himself: “ If the Soul be a  
 “ mere *Tabula rasa*, a naked and passive Thing,  
 “ which has no innate Furniture of its own, nor any  
 “ thing at all in it, but what was impressed upon it  
 “ from without, then there could be no such thing  
 “ as Morality in the World. Very far other-  
 “ wise: There is an innate potential Faculty and  
 “ Activity, but no innate Furniture. And as the  
 “ Being and Attributes of God are the first Ori-  
 “ ginal and Source of all things, the Ground and  
 “ Foundation of all Morality, yet not immediately  
 “ dif-

Morality,  
 &c.  
 p. 288.

“ discoverable by Reason : Therefore the Infinite  
“ Mind made such derivative Participations of  
“ Knowledge, or Revelations of himself, to the  
“ Mind of Man, as might suffice for Direction in  
“ all its Moral Conduct, and to its final End.”

So to say, “ That these things must needs Id. L. 4.  
“ spring up from the active Power and Fecundity p. 149.  
“ of the Mind itself, because the corporeal Objects 156.  
“ of Sense can imprint no such things upon it, is  
“ an evasive begging of the Question ; and there  
“ is no more need for these things springing up in  
“ the Mind, than there is for Water springing up in  
“ a Vessel, because we find it there : It had a Ca-  
“ pacity to receive it, and it was conveyed by a  
“ proper Canal, or poured into it. Divine things  
“ are not the corporeal nor incorporeal Objects of  
“ Sense, yet may be, and are conveyed into the  
“ Mind by the Inlet of the Senses ; neither are  
“ they Ideas of Sensation, because Sense could im-  
“ print no such things, but they are *νόηματα*, in-  
“ tellectual intelligible Truths, when the Mind is  
“ taught and instructed in them, and then become  
“ Objects of its Apprehension, Contemplation and  
“ Thought. But they must be sown before they will  
“ spring up in the Mind : And if the Mind had  
“ such a natural Power and Fecundity to produce  
“ them, it would necessarily have an immediate  
“ Idea and direct Knowledge of them. Which is  
“ so far from being true, that the Shallowness and  
“ Frailty of its Capacities is not able to receive or  
“ bear the least Glimpse of their real Natures or Ef-  
“ fence, nor conceive them, but darkly, as they are  
“ represented to us by Analogy to Ideas of Sen-  
“ sation, which are the only immediate Objects of  
“ the Senses, and consequently of the Intellect ;  
“ therefore all others must be so mediately, by the  
“ Intercourse of some other Power and Means.”

And this Method of coming at supernatural Knowledge, is not only agreeable to Experience, or the way our own Minds will tell us they became acquainted with it ; but it is congruous to God's Proceedings with Man ; to the true Condition of Man in this State, and what alone can account for the Ignorance of the Philosophers, in these Points most important to be known ; and for that Blindness and Stupidity which have covered so many Millions of rational Creatures in all Nations and Ages of the World.

First, It is entirely congruous with the Almighty's Proceedings. God made Man an intelligent Being, or endowed him with a Capacity to receive and know Truth ; and therefore gave him also the Faculty of Speech, or Organs fit to frame articulate Sounds, and furnish'd him with Language to enable him both to receive and give Instruction ; that, Words being the Signs of internal Conceptions, or Marks for Ideas in the Mind, he might be capable first of being taught by God, and then to teach others, or to convey the Thoughts of his own Mind to another.

I think it would not be difficult to prove (and I shall in other Parts of this Work endeavour to do it) that the first Language was taught by God : Or, that Man could not of himself have discovered the Knowledge of fixing Sounds to signify Objects, Ideas, or Conceptions, so as to be Signs of, and stand for the Reality of Things, for the Subject of internal Operation in his own Mind, or make others so exactly understand his Thoughts, that the Correspondence or least Disagreement of these invisible Representations of Things should be immediately known. Or, if this were possible, that it must have been the Work of many Ages, during which time Man had been neither an intelligent nor sociable Creature, and so sent into the World to no purpose ;  
for

for tho' he had the Faculty of receiving Knowledge, and Organs adapted to form articulate Sounds, yet without Language he could not have received it; he could not have Thought, and his several Noises had been Sounds without Signification. For he that could not think, could never substitute Sounds for things, or affix Sense and Meaning to Words, any more than Parrots can, tho' they frame articulate Sounds, because there is no natural Connexion between Sounds and Ideas. And consequently Language, the Instrument of Rationality (since without it our rational Faculties had been usefess) must be ascribed, not to Man, but to God.

Words are necessary for two of the most important Purposes of Life, Thought and Conversation. First, for the recording our own Thoughts, as they stand for nothing but the Ideas or Conceptions in the Mind of him that uses them, they are Marks with certain and proper Significations, by which he is able to recollect and remember; and without them could neither call things to his View, nor exercise his Thought, nor speak intelligibly. For where there is no Object, or Mark of it in the Mind, a Man is intelligent of nothing, has nothing to exercise any internal Operation in compounding, separating, dividing, judging or reflecting; is only potentially Rational, the Use of Reason being lock'd up, and of no benefit to him. And if Children were not to hear others, they would never learn the Use of Speech; as Men without Language would rather be a Species of Apes, than rational Creatures.

Vide  
Locke,  
l. 3. c. 9.  
p. 280. c.  
2. p. 235.

So essential are Words to Reason, that we cannot think but by the help of Language. For Thought is nothing but the Speech of the Mind, which it uses to it self in all its Reflexions and Contemplations: τὸ διανοεῖσθαι λόγον, ὃν αὐτὴ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ διεξέρχεται. So a great Author argues,

Plato.

argues,

Relig. Nat.  
delin. p.  
122.

gues, that a mental Act can scarce be performed without Words, or something equivalent (I believe, says he, that even the Deaf and Dumb form to themselves some kind of Language: I mean, something which supplies the room of Language.) For Thoughts in their naked State, divested of all Words, and taken merely by themselves, are such subtile fleeting things, as are scarce capable of making any Appearance in the Mind; at least of being detained, compared together, and ranged into Sentences. If a Sentence be so made up of sensible Ideas, as to subsist in the Mind by the help of those Images which remain in the Phantasy, after the manner of a Sentence expressed in Pictures, or by Hieroglyphics: Yet such a Sentence must be very imperfect, through the want of Grammatical Inflexions, Particles, and other Additions necessary to modify and correct the Ideas, of which (Particles, &c.) there can be no Images; and indeed little more than a Set of disjointed Conceptions, scarce exhibiting any Sense without the assistance of Language to fill up the Blanks. It is by the help of Words, at least in great measure, that we even reason and discourse within our selves, as well as communicate our Thoughts and Discourse with others: And if any one observes himself well, he will find that he thinks as well as he speaks in some Language, and that in thinking he supposes and runs over silently and habitually those Sounds, which in speaking he actually makes. In short, Words seem to be as it were Bodies or Vehicles to the Sense or Meaning; and which without the other can hardly be fixed in the Mind. Let any Man try ingenuously whether he can think over but that short Prayer in *Plato*, Τα μὲν ἐδιδά, &c. abstracted quite from those and all other words, &c.

Alcib. 2.

So that Thinking is no other than a mental Speaking; as no Proposition can be understood or consider'd

consider'd by the Mind without Words. They are Signs by which it was at first acquainted with Things and all abstracted Truths, and by which alone it is able to recal them for its Use. And on this account I doubt not but the *Greeks* expressed Reason and Words by the same Term  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron$ . The single Ideas of Sensation may be viewed by the Mind without thinking : Yet we cannot unite several together so far as to form a Proposition upon them, without Words and Language.

The second Use of Speech I need but mention, no one denying its Necessity for Communication, that one Man might convey his Thoughts to another, without which he could not have been a sociable Creature ; it is the Interpreter of the Mind, whereby we can unfold the clear Meaning of our most secret Thoughts and discourse so as to be understood, which is the end of Speech.

God therefore created Man with intellectual Faculties ; and to render them subservient to the great Ends of his Being, he furnishes him with Language ; for God immediately conversed with him, as the Woman also as soon as formed did with Man. And as Language consists of Words or Names of Things, God ordered him to give Names of every Creature, which we may justly suppose to be of Divine Appointment, since their Names were according to their Natures, it not being conceivable that any human Mind (for the Reasons before given) should at the first View do this, without a supernatural Assistance and Communication.

Whence it seems to appear that Language, or the Signification of Words, and Connexion of them with the first Ideas of Sensation, without which Man could not have received any part of Knowledge, neither thought himself of sensible Objects, or the Pictures of them in his Mind, nor communicated

nicated them to others, was entirely owing to divine Instruction.

So large a Stock of Materials might have perhaps been sufficient for all the Purposes of Man, as an Inhabitant of this World only; but God intended him for another invisible and inconceivable State; therefore revealed to him so much of the things belonging thereto, as was necessary to prepare and direct him thither. Man had a Capacity to receive spiritual and intellectual Truths, and God made such Discoveries of them as plentifully to furnish the Mind with all the Means of Divine Knowledge. But these Truths were the Secrets of the most high God, what Man by his Wit, Senses, or Endeavours could not have apprehended: There would be but little Difference between the created and uncreated Nature, if the Imagination of one could find out the Infinite Perfections, Purposes, and Counsels of the other. It is equalling a Finite to an Infinite, and Man could with as little Absurdity and as much Ease create himself, as discover the Natures, give Definitions, Names, and Ideas of immaterial, incomprehensible Objects; Beings of whose real Essence, Attributes, or Operations he could not raise any Images in his Mind, and therefore could not possibly so much as think of.

All the several Ranks of Beings and Relations, which the Senses cannot discover, Actions we never heard, and Notions we cannot see, are out of the reach of their Testimony, and must be let into the Mind or come to be known some other way; which could be only from a proper Instructor, and in the Case before us, there was none but God.

The whole Voice of Antiquity agrees in this, that the Knowledge of the τὸ ὄν is Θεῶν ἐκ ἀνθρώπων δόσις, a Gift of the Gods to Men. And *Plato* says,



says, ἐπισήμη, Science, is nothing but αἴσθησις, Sensation, or that inward Judgment, which the Mind passes upon things conveyed to it through the Senses.

Even *Celsus* concluded, “ That a divine Spirit descended to acquaint the ancient Sages with those divine Truths they taught the World.” And

*Iamblichus* asserts, “ That our weak and frail Nature possesses nothing of this Knowledge as natural to it, σύμφυτον δὲ εἶδ' ἐν κέκτηται.”

It will never be said, that Man at his first Creation had a natural View of the immaterial World, or an immediate Idea of God, because such Objects or Ideas are adequately known to the Mind whose Ideas they are; but this God is not subject to, therefore no immediate Object of the Mind, and can be so only mediately by the help of Language and Information. Of material Things we form exact Pictures, Impressions or Ideas; of divine Things only Thoughts, Notions, or Conceptions, and those by Analogy to Ideas of Sensation, which are no just Representations of their real Nature, but

Reflexions ἐν ἀνίγματι, dark and obscure Resemblances, therefore cannot be a Creature of the Intellect, or any Original Production of the Mind, for then it would have been consentaneous to Nature, a real Likeness and Similitude of it. Again, the Objects of Sense to one Man, are so to every Man that has his Senses, and the Impression is the same where the Organs are not vitiated; so that all agree in the Proportions and Descriptions of them. It would be the same in spiritual Objects, if the natural Fecundity of the Mind produced them; there would be no Difference or Confusion in the Apprehensions of Men concerning God and spiritual Things; but the Faculty which is alike in all, would naturally afford the like Conceptions to all.

Yet the Thoughts of Men vary infinitely, some have true, some have false, some have weak, and others

Orig. cont.  
Cels. l. 7.  
p. 366.

§. 3 c. 18.

1 Cor. xiii.  
12.

others no Conceptions at all of these Subjects. Whence comes this, but from the different manner of Instruction? Where the Mind is justly inform'd, its Thoughts and Reasonings will (or ought to) be just and true; but when all the solid Notices wherein Mankind had been instructed became weak or obliterated, such were their Apprehensions: The Names of Things continued, and Men reasoned on them; but they reasoned falsely, their Instruction poison'd others, and spread the most detestable Opinions of the divine Nature through the World; which could not have happened if the Mind had a natural Power to raise any direct immediate Conceptions, or attain a clear Discernment of it. Whereas Men differed in nothing more than their Opinions and Sentiments of God, in which every thing was so confused and perplexed, dubious and uncertain, that it was the Subject of Dispute, not of Knowledge, and filled the World with Debate, Contention, and Strife: There is no accounting for this, but by saying, that Natural Wisdom is not the Property of Man, but of God; it grows not in the Faculty or Imagination; that whatever Science a Man has he receives it from without, it is conveyed to the Mind through the Ducts and Channel of the Senses.

To put this Argument in a yet stronger Light: As without Language Man could not have thought, or discoursed, or given Names to sensible things, it is beyond all Stretch of Power or Imagination, that even with Language he should be able to give Names to invisible incomprehensible Beings, *i. e.* to express what is inexpressible, what he could not think of, whose Essence was utterly unknown to him, and therefore he could never invent Words to stand for Ideas, Conceptions, or real Natures that he knew nothing of; and an Idea of nothing is a Contradiction. And what increases the Difficulty  
here

here is, that these Names are expressive of their Natures, and yet taken from sensible things; now if Man had any clear adequate Knowledge of them, he would have imposed Names proper and peculiar to them, so as to be distinguished from all others, and not borrowed them from inferior Natures; which is a full Evidence that they were not of human Invention; for as we conceive, so should we speak; but given by one who had a full comprehensive View of them, yet represented those glorious Objects so far transcending our Capacities, in a manner suitable to our Apprehension of them, which is not directly or immediately, but by Similitude to human Things, in order to help the Understanding towards conceiving what would otherwise be for ever hidden from us. And for this reason we can neither think, conceive, nor express ourselves concerning them, but in the manner wherein they have been represented to us.

Thus the divine Nature, tho' in itself, by reason of its absolute Simplicity and Infinitude, it can neither be defined nor apprehended by us under any one adequate Conception or Notion; yet God has revealed himself by various Names which lead us to the Contemplation of his Nature and Attributes, and yet suited to our Capacities, or manner of apprehending divine Objects. Thus *Jehovah* is the Name of Essence or Substance; *El*, of Force, Fortitude and Power; *Shaddai*, is All-sufficiency; *Adonai*, the Lord of the Universe; *Elohim*, the most High; *Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts, &c. hereby denoting Eternity, Omnipotence, Independence, Self-Existence, the Creator of the World, the Giver and Preserver of Being to all his Creatures, &c. which no created Understanding could have known or explicated, without a Communication from him who is the Author of Essence, Existence, and all Perfection.

So

So a Spirit, in the primary Signification, is *Breath*, thereby alluding to its invisible subtile Nature. Angel is a *Messenger*, denoting the Office of those illustrious Ministers who attend round the Throne. These and other Names of spiritual Objects, could not have been given but by one well acquainted with the Secrets of Heaven, which neither *Adam* nor any of his Posterity possibly could be, without a Revelation from Heaven.

The Heathens, it is certain, did not hold divine Names to be of human Institution, but from the Gods, and what therefore could not be alter'd, as not retaining the same peculiar Force when translated into any other Language, and (which is worth observing) that the Barbarous (*i. e.* the Jewish or Oriental) Names were more emphatical and brief, and had the least Ambiguity and Variety of Diction. So *Plato*, tho' he derives them originally from the Gods, yet confesses the *Greeks* had them from the Barbarians.

Vid. Iam-  
blich. de  
Myft. § 7.  
c. 5.

And these Revelations to Man had a double Use. 1. To enable him to fulfil the Ends of his Being; and, 2. To communicate and transmit them to others, that there might be no necessity of maintaining a perpetual Intercourse between Heaven and Earth; to exercise the Duty of Faith, both as a rational and a moral Agent. Nor is there any danger of mistake, for these Subjects of divine Communication are as easily separated, distinguished and known from all other Notices of the Mind, as the different Ideas, convey'd by the several Senses, are.

If a Man takes a Survey of his own Mind, and enquires how he came by Ideas, or those perfect Representations of material Beings he sees pictured there, as of a House, a Man, &c. he will easily perceive, that it was by the Organ of Sight; if of Sounds, by Hearing; and so on. His Senses, Understanding

derstanding, and Experience, are infallible Witnesses of it.

But if we come to ask such an one, whether he has a clear Perception of Objects above the fixed Stars? he will answer in the Negative. If we demand a Reason why? It is because he never had a near distinct View of them. By what Notes or Characters does he represent them in his Mind? By the most glorious Semblances of material Things. Did he discover these invisible immaterial Beings by any internal Operations or Reflexions of his own? No Man that ever lived could answer in the Affirmative. By what means then did he come to have a Notion of what he never saw nor heard, of the Mansions in Heaven, the blessed Angels, the infinite Creator of all Things, &c.? The Reply, without hesitation, will be, that he was taught them, instructed in their Nature and Perfections from Analogy or Representation to sensible Things. Whether he could possibly frame any other Conception of them, or, by any Stretch of the Mind, raise new Ideas of immaterial Objects, wherein he had never been instructed? It is impossible he should. From whom did he learn them? From his Parents or Masters. From whom did they receive their Knowledge? From their Ancestors. Which will lead us on till we come at the first Parents of Mankind, who were instructed by God himself. Hence comes that universal Acceptation of the Word *Learning*: All spiritual Knowledge is such, we learn'd it from our Fathers, and they from God.

In the whole of this Procedure, there is nothing but what is plain and natural, agreeable to the Experience and Testimony of every Man's Conscience and Understanding, that will but consult them, and satisfy himself how he came by the Possession of any Truth.

We indeed are told by others of Ideas of Sensation, Ideas of Reflexion, Ideas of Self-consciousness, Ideas of Thinking, Willing, and all the internal Operations of the Mind, simple Ideas and complex Ideas, Ideas of simple Modes, and Ideas of mixed Modes, Ideas of primary and secondary Qualities, Ideas of Power, collective Ideas of Substances, Ideas of Causes and Effects, Ideas of Relations, and numberless others. By a due Combination, Abstraction, and Reflexion of which, we may by Illation infer the Necessity, Existence, Nature and Properties of immaterial Beings, and those Relations we stand in to them.

But miserable would be the Case of Man, were he doom'd to learn his Duty, his Happiness, and his God, from such unnatural insignificant Jumbles of Words: For who then could be saved? How few ever understand them? How much fewer would be able to go through the Labyrinth of these several Operations? And when they had, it would help them but little in the Search of Truth, that real and substantial Knowledge, which renders them better, as well as wiser, to obey God here, and enjoy him hereafter.

Besides, in all our Knowledge and Experience, there is not the least Ground for this Omnipotence in the Mind. It cannot think or operate without some precedent Ideas to work upon. With the Combination of all its Powers, it cannot produce one new Idea without the Help of the Senses; or Notions of Invisibilities, but by borrowing them from Sensation. Let a Person of the greatest natural Sagacity, acquir'd Improvements, and exercised in metaphysical abstracted Reasonings, try it, and he will not find one Idea in his Imagination, not a single Picture in his Intellect, that exhibits Things quite removed from all Degrees of Sense: Nor can he affix any precise determin'd Idea, that he shall steadily

steadily annex to them, as often as he shall happen to revolve them in his Mind.

But what alone may convince every impartial Enquirer, that these Truths could come from no other Source than that of Revelation; is the Impossibility of altering, enlarging, or diminishing them. We know them so far as God has taught us, and no further; we can neither discover new Objects, nor conceive those that have been revealed to us, otherwise than as they were communicated, nor can know them better by any Similitudes, Relations, or Oppositions we can frame: Nor have all the Self-reflexions or Abstractions of the most exalted Minds, from any Combinations or Alterations of Ideas, been able, amidst their other prodigious Discoveries, to add a single *Iota* to one of these. Which could not have been, if these Subjects had been the Product of Reason, Thinking, or human Enquiry. All other Arts and Sciences have been gradual, and most of them yet short of Perfection. But where God is the Teacher, Reason is at a Nonplus; it can go no further, nor add to his Determinations; they are all of that kind of first Principles, which give all Evidence to, but receive no Evidence from our Conclusions.

Secondly, This Method of accounting for our attaining Knowledge by Instruction, is most agreeable to Experience, and the Condition of Mankind thro' all Ages; as in a good measure appears from what has been already said: And it will, upon Examination, be found, that all our real and solid Knowledge is entirely owing to it; not from any private internal Growth, but the Pains and Culture of others. For without any Indignity to the imperial Faculty of Reason, (which is common to all, and the Capacity of Learning much the same) the apparent Difference among Men, proceeds from Instruction or Attention. *Ratio est communis, doctrina differens, discendi* Cic. Leg. quidem 1. N. 10.

Laſtant.  
L. 6.  
P. 514.

*quidem facultate par.* And this explains the old Diſtinction, that *Virtue is our own, but Wiſdom is not,* becauſe we are obliged to the Inſtruction of others for it. *Virtus eſt intus in nobis, ſcientia ad nos extrinſecus venit. Scientia igitur alieni beneficii eſt, quia poſita eſt in audiendo.*

Repub. 7.  
p. 256.

No one denies that Men are, what *Plato* juſtly calls them, *φύσει λογιστικοί*, by Nature capable of Reaſon, and Reaſon of vaſt Attainments in Knowledge: But neither one nor the other could be without Language, nor Language without Inſtruction, nor Inſtruction (in the Language of divine things at leaſt) but from God. This is the Order of Nature, the Appointment of its Author, which there is no deviating from. As it alone ſolves thoſe otherwiſe unaccountable Difficulties, in the Savagenefs of Nations, the Ignorance of Ages, the horrid Errors of Philoſophy, the gradual Advancement, Perfection, or Decay of Religion, Arts, and Sciences: The only Difference was according to the Opportunity of receiving Inſtruction. *Greece* was a thouſand Years without the leaſt Tincture of Philoſophy, or Knowledge of Nature; and when it appeared among them, it was not of their own Manufacture, but the Spoils of *Egypt* and the Eaſt. Their Fathers were as well fitted for Improvement as their Descendants, but had no Inſtructors, nor knew where to look for them: And *Socrates*, in his *Apology*, tells the *Athenians*, “ That they will fall into an irrecoverable State, “ unleſs God ſhall take care of them, and ſend them “ another Inſtructor.” So the *Romans*, and every diſtant Nation, were barbarous for want of Inter-  
course; and on the ſame account the *New Guinea* Men are Savages to this Day.

For the Mind of every one being at firſt a perfect Blank, if nothing were wrote upon it but the Observations of naked unaffiſted Reaſon, it would be little better than a Sheet of blotted Paper, filled  
per-



perhaps with Characters, but those deformed and useleſs, without one Note or Thought relating to God, Eternity, or a future State. And notwithstanding the Cenſures ſome Moderns have paſſ'd upon *Lactantius* and others, for aſſerting that nothing could be known of God but by Revelation: As if they hereby attempted to diſcredit human Reaſon, and we therefore ought to beware of them and their Doctrines; becauſe whoever depreciate Reaſon, we may be aſſured they have ſome very unwarrantable Paradoxes to advance, &c. It may on the other hand be affirmed with equal Juſtice, that no one exalts Reaſon above its proper Limits, as the Light of Heaven, and the Oracle of God; but with an intent to depreciate Revelation, and make Man the Meaſure of Truth. But Truth will ſuſtain itſelf; and no Article in it has a ſurer Foundation than this, that nothing can be known of God but immediately from God; nothing has a more concurrent Teſtimony of all Antiquity and learned Men in the World: To which alſo may be added, that Man is not born wiſe, but becomes ſo by Teaching and Inſtruction.

It muſt be confeſſed, that in the firſt Ages of Philoſophy, when every thing was under Litigation, much ado was made about *Virtue* in Man, whether it were by Acquisition or natural Infuſion; ſome held the latter, ſome the former; *Plato* is variable. But tho' he and *Socrates* at ſome times made *Virtue* produced by *Θεία μοίρα*, a *Divine Fate*, without a *Meno*, Concurrence of the Mind; yet *Timeus Locrus*, from P. 89. whom *Plato* borrowed ſo many Notions, though he taught the Principles of *Virtue* to be from Nature, yet affirm'd the Middle and End (or the Completion) of them, to be from Diligence, by the means of Inſtitution and Philoſophy, *διὰ παιδείας* P. 103. *ἢ φιλοſοφίας*, which ſtrengthen *Virtue*, as Exercise does the Body. And *Socrates* who ſtudied *Virtue*, we know, found Inſtruction ſo neceſſary, that he

Ethic. l. 2.  
c. 1.

was not ashamed to be taught by Women; he call'd *Diotima* his Mistress, and for a long time frequented *Aspasia*. *Aristotle* divided Virtue into *Rational* and *Moral*: The first he makes chiefly to proceed from, and be perfected by Instruction; the other, which are *Ethics*, to depend entirely on Custom or Manners, from which they take their Name, and differ very little. Several of the Stoicks held the Seeds of Virtue to be in *Nature*; as *Cleanthes*, that a good Man was such φύσει καὶ μὴ διδασκῆται, by *Nature*, not by *Institution*; yet others of them taught ἀρετὴν διδασκῆται, that *Virtue was teachable*; and even *Zeno*, in an Epistle to *Antigonus*, that an ingenuous Mind, with the Assistance of a Master and competent Exercise, might easily attain to perfect Virtue. But the prevailing Opinion of the Ancients was, that four Things (φύσις, λόγος, παιδεία, καὶ ἀσκησις) *Nature, Reason, Instruction, and Application*, were as necessary to the attaining Virtue, and every Art, as a rich Soil, proper Culture, a painful Husbandman, and good Seed, are to a fruitful Harvest (and *Plutarch* wrote a little Work to prove Virtue to be from *Industry*) That good Education and Instruction make good Natures; and good Natures, from such Discipline, are made better than they were before; for Men become good and wise, not from Nature, but Instruction and Care: That they who are least disposed to them by Nature, will by these means be brought to practise every Branch of them; as they who by Nature are the fittest, will become bad thro' Sloth and Negligence; and they look'd upon the forming the Minds of Youths to be as much owing to the Master, as the Fashion of the Clay is to the Hands of the Potter: Therefore when *Diogenes* saw a Lad behave indecently, he gave the Master a Blow, and ask'd why he instructed his Scholar no better. In

Plutarch.  
de Lib.  
Educand.

short, a good Education was esteem'd πηγὴ καὶ ρίζα καλοκαγαθίας, the Fountain and Root of all well-doing.

And

And for the same Reasons the Christians called it φωτισμός, because it illuminates; the Master Cl. Alex. takes off the Cover, opens the Store of Learning and Wisdom, and thereby manifests what before was hid. Strom. 5. p. 578.

But when they speak of Divine Learning, it is in another Strain, and the Gods are allowed to be the only Masters. Phileb. p. 17. *Plato* treating of the Divine Nature, says,

“ This Doctrine, tho’ strange, the Gods (as they say) have thus deliver’d to us to learn, and teach it to others.” And over and over again, “ That we could not learn these Truths but

from the Gods, or the Sons of the Gods; and that we cannot know their Will without a Prophet to reveal it to us.” *Iamblicus* saw the

Force of this Truth, and was positive “ That human Nature can neither speak of God, nor do any di-

vine Works without God.” *Cicero* would go further than his Master *Plato*, in saying, “ That Philosophy (under which he includes the whole of

Religion) was not only the Gift, but the Invention of the Gods. *Philosophia omnium mater ar-*

*tium, ut Plato ait donum, ut ego inventum Deorum.*

And Christians, till latter Ages, affirmed *θεοδοσιαν*, that divine Wisdom, or the Knowledge of

divine Things was from God; and that Learning and Knowledge are to be received from what we

hear, and not from what we see.

For these Reasons, the World has always laid so great a stress upon Education, as if without it Man would scarce become a rational Creature; or whatever Faculties he has, they would have remained useless to all the Purposes of Knowledge, Society, and Life. This is a Subject I may hereafter more largely treat of; and therefore at present shall only speak the Sentiments of *Plutarch*, as they will both shew the Necessity of it for the reclaiming of Nature, and what was the Opinion of the wisest Ancients upon this Head.

Tusc. Q. L. 1. N. 26.

Theodo-

ret. Serm.

p. 7. Laſtant.

De Amore Prolis. He observes, That no Creature comes into the World under so many Disadvantages as Man; That his Education is laborious, his Increase slow, and Virtue seated at so great a distance, that few Parents live till their Sons can reach it. Hence *Neocles* did not see *Themistocles* a Conqueror at *Salamis*; nor *Miltiades* the Triumphs of *Cimon*; *Xantippus* never heard an Oration of *Pericles*, nor *Aristo* the Philosophy of *Plato*.

Advers. Colot. vol. 2. 408. That Life indeed we have from Parents, but to live well, from Learning and Education, which are as necessary to the Mind as the Nurser's Milk is to the Body; and he that wants it, will prove like a Whelp brought up in an old Woman's Lap, useles, and good for nothing: For if Nature produce any good Affections, yet, like Trees unprun'd, they run into false Shoots, and unprofitable Wood. Men take pains to learn all other Arts, Reading, Riding, Musick, Dancing, nay even what is necessary for Meat and Drink, and Raiment; not one of which, without Learning, could they in any Instance do tolerably. And can any thing be more ridiculous than to see the common Acts of Life want Direction, and yet conclude that Prudence and Wisdom, and the Art of living well, for the sake of which all other things are provided, and the right Use of our intellectual Faculties, to which every Branch of Knowledge is subservient, can be attain'd without Art and Care, and be owing entirely to Chance? Whoever denies that Virtue is owing to Instruction, denies there is any such thing as Virtue; for it proceeds from being taught, and he that hinders the teaching of it, does what he can to root it out of the World.

De Auditione, vol. 1. 155. De Lib. educand. p. 2. Of all the Senses therefore, *Hearing* is of the greatest service to Virtue and Reason: For Nature, without Teaching and Instruction, is blind, *ἡ μὲν γὰρ φύσις ἀνευ μαθήσεως τυφλὸν*; and he lays such stress thereon,

thereon, that whereas Nature, Reason, and Application, are necessary Concurrents to Wisdom, yet he will have Reason to be nothing but Instruction, καλω δὲ λόγον μὲν, τὴν μάθησιν. For the Mind of Children is like soft Wax, capable of Impression, but afterwards grows hard, and will not receive it. They stand in need therefore of Instruction and Care, as much as Beasts; which *Lycurgus* intended to shew, by bringing up a Couple of Whelps, one to Sports in the Field, the other fondled at home: That proved sagacious and useful in its kind, this good for nothing but to lick a Trencher. He afterwards produced them in a full Assembly of *Spartans*, to enforce the Necessity of Education; for the Difference did not proceed from Nature, both having the same Sire and Dam, but from Education; and that this formed us to Virtue more than Nature. The Application was, That Learning, Institution, and accustoming themselves to do as *Hercules* did, would tend more to their Glory, than the boasting of being descended from him.

Lacon.  
Apothg.  
Lycurgus.

It is Intercourse and Commerce that improve the Mind; and without them Man would have been the most savage and shameless Creature in the World, πάντων ἀγριώτατον ζῶον, καὶ ἀναιδέστατος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦν. And that to this alone did even *Greece* owe her Literature and Politeness, the Use of Wine, and Corn, and Letters.

Aquæ &  
Ignis  
Comparatio,  
p. 957.

And the whole may be summed up in this: That Man by Nature has Reason; but Reason perfected and endowed with Virtue, is owing to Discipline and Industry.

De Solert.  
Animal.  
p. 962.

This is sufficient to shew how degraded the Condition of Man, and his potential Reason, would be without Instruction; a wild Savage, under no Restraint or Law, without Sense to provide the common Necessaries or Comforts of Life, without the Knowledge of Manners, Letters, or Religion. So many

many always have been, and still are, with a Language scarce articulate, without Shelter or Raiment, without Food but what Nature equally provides for them and Beasts, without any Apprehensions of God or another World ; and, in all respects, approaching nearer to the Brutal than the Rational Intellectual State. And if we believe *Pliny*, Man without Instruction would neither speak, nor walk, nor eat. And even at this day, without Instruction, the very Apprehension of Religion would be soon lost in the World.

Proem. l.  
7. Homi-  
nem scire  
nihil sine  
doctrina,  
non fari,  
non ingre-  
di, non  
vesci.

Thirdly, This Account of coming at Knowledge agrees with all the Annals of Antiquity and Histories in the World.

*Moses* has recorded the Settlements of the First Parents of Mankind, where God in a more frequent and immediate manner gave Revelations of his Will, and commanded them to teach it to their Children, and their Childrens Children. Hence, those first Colonies of the East, *Phœnicia*, *Persia*, and *Egypt*, continued the Oracles of Learning to the World through all succeeding Ages. The further Men dispersed from them, the more they became sunk in Barbarity, and divested of Humanity. Reason was like the Echo, where nearest to the Voice it was strong, but as it removed, gradually sunk and died away. And what not a little contributed to this Preservation of Knowledge in the East, was God's continuing to reveal himself to the *Jews* ; so that in process of time the little Spot of *Jewry* was the only Place where the true God was known and taught. And some Beams of this Divine Wisdom could not but shine forth from time to time upon the neighbouring People who conversed with them.

Accordingly, whenever we find a People begin to revive in Literature, it was owing to one of these Causes ; either to some Transnigrators from those Parts coming and settling among them, or else to their

their going thither for Instruction. From these Fountains they always had it, and at this Fire the Nations of the World lighted their own. There is no Instance to be given to the contrary. Hither *Athens*, and afterwards *Rome*, came in quest of Knowledge and Instruction. These were the Schools and Masters to the World. And though our Accounts of *Asia* are but short and defective, yet what Remains there are, as also their Traditions even in *China*, trace their Original and Oracles westward; which is the fullest Confirmation of the *Mosaick* History, and of the Propagation of Knowledge by Instruction only.

*Adam* no doubt had infused Science, with a large imperious Understanding. He saw all his eldest Descendants before the Flood, except *Noah*; and unquestionably did instruct them both by Example and Precept, in the Knowledge and Worship of the true God, and what tremendous Crimes Apostacy and Disobedience were. This *Noah* (who had conversed with many of the Antediluvian Patriarchs) and *Shem*, that Preacher of Righteousness, did, after the Flood, instructing their Descendants in that true Theology, and most excellent Philosophy, they had received from their Fathers. From whence the Eastern Schools, especially the *Jewish* and *Babylonian*, became the most famous in the World, the Inventors of all useful Arts and Sciences, and the Fountains from which all other Nations received their Religion and Learning; as the very Oracles of *Apollo* confess. *Abraham* being thoroughly instructed in Geometry, Astronomy, and all the Literature of the East, is supposed by many to be the first who transplanted them into *Egypt*, and to have founded the School at *Memphis*, where they so assiduously applied themselves to the Culture and Increase of Knowledge, that they were looked upon by other Parts of the World to be the Inventors

Vid. Eufeb. Præp. L. 9. c. 3.

ventors of all the Arts they found practised there; and *Joseph* might instruct them in other Parts of Wisdom, so that many look upon him as the *Apis*, or great God of *Egypt*. Among the *Jews* the Houses of the Patriarchs were the Schools of Religion and Learning; afterwards in the Cities of the *Levites* the Youths were instructed in Knowledge and the Law of God. *Samuel* presided over the *Naioth*, or College of *Ramah*: And in the Schools of *Jericho* and *Ramoth-Gilead*, the Disciples were called the Sons of the Prophets. And from these Seminaries of Learning did *Thales*, *Plato*, and others in After-ages take all the Seeds of Knowledge, which they cultivated at home with such Success and Applause.

With this Account the ancient Authors agree.

Vid. Eu-  
feb. Præp.  
L. 9. c. 17.  
Id. c. 26.

*Eupolemus* speaking of the *Babylonish* Traditions, says, the *Egyptian* Priests of *Heliopolis* learned Astrology from *Abraham*. And that *Moses* first taught the Use of Letters to the *Jews*, from whom the *Phœnicians* received them, as the *Greeks* did from the *Phœnicians*. *Artapanus* relates much the same Thing, that *Abraham* first taught Astronomy to the *Phœnicians* and *Egyptians*, and so do *Melo* and *Philo*.

Id. c. 18,  
19, 20.

The Truth is, that wherever there is Science, there must have been Discipline; and where there is Discipline, there must have been a Master; and this Master we may find if we inquire for him, wherever the Registers of Time have been preserved.

Vid. Cl.  
Alexandr.  
Strom. 6.  
P. 643.

As for instance, *Theophrastus* learned of *Aristotle*, *Aristotle* of *Plato*, *Plato* of *Socrates*, *Socrates* of *Anaxagoras* and *Archelaus*, and so on. If we go to *Thales* and the first wise Men, we must again stop and inquire who were their Masters; if it be said, the *Egyptians*, or *Indians*, *Babylonians* and *Magi*; they again we see had their Teachers, till at length we come to the Origin of Mankind; and if we then



then ask who was the Teacher and Instructor, it certainly could not be any Mortal. If it be said, the Angels were, this cannot be; for whatever Communications they might make as Angels, or spiritual Beings, without the Organs of Voice, Man could neither hear nor understand them; or if they assumed a human Voice and Language, this must have been by special Permission and Appointment. But even Angels were but Learners of Truth, for they had a beginning. We must therefore ascend above all Principalities and Powers among them, till we come to one eternal uncreated Being, by whom all things were made, the only God, who is the Fountain of Truth; and who at sundry times and in divers manners, made Communications of his Will to his rational Creatures, and to whom all Knowledge and Wisdom is ultimately to be referred. And if Truth did not remain in its original Purity, it was not owing to the Instruction or the Teacher, but to the ungrateful Soil into which it fell; to the Sloth and Remissness of Men, to the Wickedness of their Heart which continually added Inventions of their own to the Worship of God; to the Wiles of the great Deceiver, who sowed Tares among it to choke and to corrupt it; so that at last it became totally defaced, and gradually wasted into Ignorance and Impiety; and the World could never rectify things without beginning again, enquiring for Masters, and searching for Instruction.

And this, I think, every one must be convinced of, who examines how he came by any Parts of Knowledge, or observes the Progress of Children in Learning. What have they that they did not receive? Either from Teachers, who again had their Masters, or what is the same, by reading, which is only an artificial Language and Method of Instruction.

*Fourthly,*

*Fourthly*, This accounts for the many Defects and strange Ignorance which Philosophy laboured under, with respect to these important Points, in which every thing was full of Error and Confusion. Men affirmed, denied, or explained them as their Fancy led, without any Rule to judge by. This was owing to the Depravation of original Truths, and the Inability of Reason either to discover them, or rectify Mistakes which crept into them; which made their Religion such an heap of Absurdities, their Notions of God so impious, and their Acts of Worship so idolatrous and utterly unbecoming the Divine Nature. For their endless and irreconcilable Differences were not confined to the speculative Points, but equally prevailed in the most important Rules of Duty, what was lawful or unlawful, right or wrong, what was the chief End or Good of Man, and what were the proper Means for the Attainment of Happiness. Nothing of which could have happened, if divine Subjects were either immediate Objects of the Understanding, or had at first proceeded from any Acts of Reflexion or Abstraction; for then Men would either have retained just Ideas, or at least such worthy Apprehensions as *Noah, Abraham, &c.* confessedly taught; or else in the Course of so many Ages and severe Application, would certainly have retrieved them by the same Operations of the Mind which at first discovered them.

But nothing of this appears, nor do we hear of any means of Knowledge, but their Fathers relating what they had received from their Ancestors. A Relation of bare Names and Facts without the Reasons of them; for the true Notions and Reasons of things became soon corrupted or lost after the Dispersion. They had some general Terms and Propositions transmitted to them; but that they understood them not, is evident, because they never could

could give any tolerable account of them: For whenever they attempted to give Reasons for their Opinions, they perverted and depraved them, and the more they commented upon Truth, the more did they corrupt it. It was by their own vain Speculations that they reasoned out of the World the invisible things of God, which had been some way or other related to them, and changed these, with the plain Narrations of Fact and History, into Fable, Superstitions, Extravagancies, and a Lye.

Even *Serranus* can allow that *Plato* spake many things which he understood not, drawn out of the *Phœnician* or *Syrian* Theology. These *Plato* frequently mentions, and calls them ἀπόρητοι, Ineffable and unintelligible. For as their Traditions were of *Hebrew* Extraction, and such as referred to the *Jewish* Mysteries and divine Worship; it is no wonder they were Unintelligible to the wisest Heathens. Therefore *Plato* calls them μῦθοι, Fables, which in their philosophical Notion signify some Mysteries handed down from the Ancients, the Reasons whereof were hidden and unknown. The learned *Julius Scaliger* affirms the same; that *Plato* took many things out of the *Phœnician* Theology which he understood not; and meeting with many *Jewish* Records or Traditions concerning divine Mysteries, without understanding the Sense or Import of them, he called them Fables; and truly made such of them, notwithstanding the Assistance of Allegory or Mythology.

Exercit.  
61.

These Traditions however furnished *Plato's* Philosophy with all the divine Truths in it. And because he could not clear or explain them, *Aristotle* rejected them, and this whole Mode of Philosophy, because his Reason could not comprehend them. He would trust to no other Guide, but as *Simplicius* observes, confining himself to the Sphere of his own Reason, would needs examine divine Matters by Nature,

ture, and admit nothing but what he thought was grounded on the Light of Nature, or his own corrupt Reason. Now if *Plato* understood them, surely he could have explained the Reasons to the Capacity of his Scholar: Or if these Truths were at first discovered by the Operations of Reason, it is altogether unconceivable that so profound and discursive a Mind as that of *Aristotle* should not discern the Meaning and Reasons of them; but also fall into so many erroneous contrary Opinions; that the World was Eternal, governed by Nature or Chance, the Soul an Act of the Body, &c. He rejected Truth, because he could not prove it; and undertook to prove what was totally distant from Truth, and therefore not capable of Proof; and so becomes a most pregnant Argument, that no Reason however elevated could discover divine Objects; since it cannot rightly judge of them when proposed to its Contemplation, except it be instructed in the Reason and Nature of them, and that by a Master more skilful than *Plato* was.

To which may be added, that the wisest Men of old, never thought that divine Objects were to be spun out of the Bowels of the Mind by Ideas of Reflexion and Abstraction. They stay'd not at home to consult their own Reasonings, but traversed the World, and spent great part of their Lives in searching for Masters and Instruction. And it is evident that they who conversed most abroad, did speak far more agreeably to the true Account of things, than such who only endeavoured by their own Wits to improve or correct those Principles which were delivered by others; which must be, because they did not depend upon Reason, and that the Universal Tradition of the first Ages was preserved far better in the East, than in *Greece* or other Nations. But it was great Vanity or Ignorance

rance in *Plato*, after such frequent Confessions of the *Greeks* receiving their Knowledge from the *Barbarians*, to say in his *Epinomis*, that they put it in a better Fashion; whereas the most ancient of them, especially the Poets, so disfigured Traditions by Conceits of their own, that they never recovered their pristine Form. And afterwards a *Greek* Dress always served to disguise and conceal from whence they had them.

And the Reason why these indefatigable Pursuers of Wisdom succeeded no better in their laudable Attempts, was, that tho' they sought for Instruction, yet they could not find Masters, but such who were at the greatest loss themselves in these important Points. The ancient Mysteries of God, Creation, Providence, &c. were become broken incoherent Fragments, their Sublimity and Greatness not apprehended in any due Measure; they had undergone strange Alterations according to the Vanity or Opinion of different Ages, so that they scarce bore any Resemblance of their original Truth and Beauty: And it was a Task too hard for human Minds to rectify them, pare off the Errors, separate Truth from Fallhood, restore the true Meaning, or see the Reasons so, as to give any tolerable Account of them.

But nothing of this could have happened, if the Mind were naturally capable of discerning them, or producing Ideas of them by any internal Operation, Abstraction, or Reflexion. For to discern a thing, must imply some Resemblance of its Nature, Truth, and Being, as it is; and an Ability to explain, or give some Account of it to others. But this they could not do, they had neither sufficient Knowledge to satisfy themselves, nor the Reasons of them to convince others. Therefore every Scholar took the Liberty to dissent from his Master, nothing was agreed or concluded on; but the sublimest Truths

continued the Subjects of Debate, Dissension, and Contradiction, in all the Schools of Philosophy, as long as they subsisted in the World.

From whence also another great Argument might be inferred, to shew how entirely divine Knowledge depends upon Instruction; and that is, the Difference between a Christian and a Philosopher: How inferior the Light of an *Augustan* Age, in these Subjects, was to that of a Child trained up in the School of Christ: A Topick which the primitive Doctors never failed to boast of: That their Farmers, Ditchers, and Herdsmen, knew more of the Nature of God, his Dealings with Men, his Acts of Creation, Providence, &c. than ever *Plato* or *Aristotle* did.

Theodo-  
ret. Serm.  
5. p. 81.

But this, and several other Points, I only touch upon at present; reserving a fuller Discussion of them, for a more proper place in some following part of this Work.

The Sum is, that divine Truths are not immediate Objects of the Understanding; for then we should be able to have a full Idea, Knowledge, or Comprehension of them. But they are mediately so, by Communication, and what therefore we can have no Apprehensions or Notions of, but as they are communicated, or represented to us. It is this gives Act to that Capacity of the Mind, which was only potential before: For as Objects are visible to the natural Eye, but not without the Interposition of Light; so neither are heavenly Objects to the Intellect, but by the Intervention of some Agent, which can be only God.

This the greatest of Philosophers (would we but attend to him) plainly asserts; *That Faith* (the Belief and Knowledge of heavenly Subjects, the only Evidence of things not seen) *cometh by Hearing* (through the Senses) *and hearing by the Word of God*, which is the Revelation of his Will.

If then Sensation and Instruction by the help of Language (which is the Instrument of Thought, and Conveyor of Notices from one Mind to another) be the only Inlets of Knowledge, whereby the Mind can receive Information of any Object external to itself, whether visible or invisible; which I think every impartial Inquirer into the Method of his coming at Knowledge, must allow; and no Ideas of Sensation can of themselves create or raise Conceptions of insensible Things, which they cannot possibly take Cognisance of: Then it must follow, that all our Stock of spiritual Knowledge, whereby we are enabled to contemplate, or in any measure apprehend the Natures, Attributes, or Relations of invisible immaterial Objects, must proceed wholly from Language and Instruction. Nothing therefore need be added concerning the Fourth Inlet of Knowledge, or the Ideas of Reflexion: They having, throughout the precedent Discourse, been proved absurd and impossible; as the Mind has no Power, by its own Operations, to add the least Idea, or fresh Materials to its Store of Knowledge. It can divide or compound them, and thereby raise Monsters in the Imagination, the several Parts of which, when duly separated, will be found no other than several Ideas of Sensation unnaturally jumbled together.

And consequently an End might be here put to any further Inquiry concerning the Religion or Law of Nature. For if all Religion, Morality, and Law are founded on the divine Perfections; and unassisted Reason could never attain a Knowledge of spiritual Objects and Truths, such as the divine Nature and Will, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State; it is utterly impossible that it should find out a sufficient Rule of Life, to direct Man to his final Happiness and End. “ For, as Mr. *Locke* L. 1. c. 3. “ argues, what Duty is, cannot be understood without §. 12.

“ a Law ; nor a Law be known, or supposed with-  
 “ out a Law-maker, or without Reward and Pu-  
 “ nishment. So that it is impossible that any prac-  
 “ tical Principle should be innate, *i. e.* be imprinted  
 “ on the Mind as a Duty, without supposing the  
 “ Ideas of God, of Law, of Obligation, of Pu-  
 “ nishment, of a Life after this, Innate. But none  
 “ of these, not even the Idea of God is innate, nor  
 “ to be attained by Reflexion on Ideas of Sen-  
 “ sation : Therefore whatever way we come at the  
 “ Knowledge of things themselves, by that only  
 “ can we know the Relations necessarily flowing  
 “ from, and depending on them ; if by Instruc-  
 “ tion only we are acquainted with the Lawgiver,  
 “ by the same means alone must we be acquainted  
 “ with his Law, or the Rule of our Duty.”

For our greater Satisfaction however, I shall pro-  
 ceed to examine what this Law or Religion of  
 Nature is ; and what those Arguments are which  
 have so universally persuaded Mankind, that Rea-  
 son or the Light of Nature is capable of such a Dis-  
 covery, as to form to itself a perfect Law, or Rule  
 of acting.

But here I cannot omit taking notice of a learned  
 and ingenious Essay upon the Inlets of human  
 Knowledge, published since the writing of the above  
 Sheets ; and between which there seems to be little  
 difference, except in the Terms used of Language and  
 Instruction, which certainly import the same thing.  
 Therefore I made no Alteration in this Chapter ;  
 since I apprehend my Sentiments to be agreeable to,  
 if not perfectly the same with those of that excellent  
 Author.





## C H A P. III.

*Of the Law of Nature.*

**I**N the Inquiry into the Law of Nature, the Question is, whether Man be endued with such natural Abilities, that by a due Use of them he can attain the Knowledge of whatever is requisite to the End and Perfection of his Being; or has Faculties, which, without the Aid of Revelation, can discover a sufficient Rule and Law of Duty to instruct and direct him in all things needful to be known or done, for the Attainment of his final Happiness.

That the Point may be truly stated, we shall first see what they understand by the Law of Nature, who affirm it is discoverable by the bare Light of Reason.

From the Ancients, the Testimony of *Cicero* may suffice, who abounds in this Subject, though he is not always strictly consistent with himself. He defines it to be, *Vera ratio, naturæ congruens, diffusa* De Repub. *in omnes, constans, sempiterna*, “ That right Reason, which is consonant to Nature, what all are Partakers of, immutable and eternal.” And again, *Est enim lex nihil aliud nisi recta & à numine Deorum tracta ratio, imperans honesta, prohibens contraria*, Philip. 11. p. 529. “ The Law is nothing else but right Reason derived from the Gods, commanding Good, and forbidding Evil.” And in numberless Places he makes Universal Consent the distinguishing Character of this Law. *Omni in re consensus omnium gentium, lex naturæ putanda est*. “ That whatever all Nations consent to, must be deemed as the Law

Fragment. “ of Nature. Nor is there any other Expounder  
 ut *supra*. “ or Interpreter of this Law to be sought for ;  
 “ there will not be one Law at *Rome*, and another  
 “ at *Athens* ; one in this Age, another hereafter ;  
 “ but one immutable eternal Law obliges all Nati-  
 Nat. D. “ ons and Ages ; for what all consent to, must ne-  
 l. 1. n. 17. “ cessarily be true.”

Amongst the Moderns we may be concluded by  
 the Authorities of *Hooker*, *Grotius*, *Puffendorf*, *Wil-*  
*kins*, and *Clarke*.

Eccl. Po. The judicious *Hooker* thus expresses himself: “ The  
 Lt. 1. 1. “ natural Measure whereby to judge of our Do-  
 §. 8. “ ings, is the Sentence of Reason determining and  
 “ setting down what is good to be done, and  
 “ therefore must be done; and the Law of Rea-  
 “ son or human Nature is that which Men by dis-  
 “ course of natural Reason have rightly found out  
 “ themselves to be all for ever bound to in their  
 “ Actions; which Laws are investigable by Rea-  
 “ son, without the help of Revelation; there being  
 “ nothing in it, but what any Man (having natural  
 “ Perfection of Wit and Ripeness of Judgment)  
 “ may by labour and travel find out. Therefore  
 “ the Law of Nature, or, as it may be termed  
 “ more fitly, the Law of Reason, comprehendeth  
 “ all those things which Men by the Light of  
 “ their Understanding evidently know, or at least  
 “ wise Men may know, to be seeming or unseem-  
 “ ing, virtuous or vicious, good or evil for them  
 “ to do. There are in it some things which stand  
 “ as Principles; and out of these Principles, which  
 “ are in themselves evident, the greatest moral  
 “ Duties we owe towards God or Man, may with-  
 “ out any great Difficulty be concluded.”

De Jur. *Hugo Grotius* defines the Law of Nature, “ To  
 Bel. & “ be the Dictate of right Reason, shewing the moral  
 Pac l. 1. “ Turpitude or moral Obligation of any Action,  
 c. 1. §. 10. “ from its Agreement or Disagreement with na-  
 “ tural

“ tural Reason, and consequently that such Action  
 “ is commanded, or prohibited by God the Au-  
 “ thor of Nature.”

*Guil. Grotius* defines it, “ To be the Law which  
 “ God, as the Author of Nature, has implanted  
 “ in the Hearts of all Men, to discern Virtue from  
 “ Vice, commanding the one, forbidding the  
 “ other.” De Prin-  
 cip. Jur.  
 Natural.  
 c. 1. §. 10.

*Puffendorf* says, “ The Law of Nature is to be  
 “ drawn from Man’s Reason, flowing from the  
 “ true Current of the Faculty when unperverted,  
 “ and without the extraordinary Assistance of  
 “ Revelation may be solidly found out and de-  
 “ monstrated by the bare force of Reason, such as  
 “ God first implanted, and still preserves in Man-  
 “ kind.” L. 2. c. 3.  
 §. 13.

*Bishop Wilkins* thus deduces it, “ Religion is that  
 “ general Habit of Reverence towards the Divine  
 “ Nature, whereby we are enabled and inclined to  
 “ worship and serve God after such a manner as we  
 “ conceive most agreeable to his Will, so as to  
 “ procure his Favour and Blessing. I call that  
 “ Natural Religion which Men might know, and  
 “ should be obliged unto by the mere Principles of  
 “ Reason, improved by Consideration and Expe-  
 “ rience, without the help of Revelation. This com-  
 “ prehends under it these three principal Things.  
 “ *First*, A Belief and Acknowledgment of the Di-  
 “ vine Nature and Existence. *Secondly*, Due Appre-  
 “ hensions of his Excellencies and Perfections.  
 “ *Thirdly*, Suitable Affections and Demeanour to-  
 “ wards him.” Nat. Relig.

*Dr. Clarke*, “ That the primary and original  
 “ Law of God, is the Law of Nature; that eter-  
 “ nal and unchangeable Law of Morality, which  
 “ necessarily arises from the Nature of Creatures,  
 “ and from their Relation to God, and each  
 “ other. And the Wisdom of this Law is the  
 “ very” Vol. 1.  
 Serm. 13.

“ very same as the Wisdom of God’s Creation it-  
 “ self, being nothing else than the Universal Be-  
 “ nefit and Happinets of all reasonable Creatures,  
 “ arising from their acting according to that Na-  
 “ ture which God has given them, and according to  
 “ the respective Relations wherein they are placed  
 “ thereby.”

But we shall more distinctly learn the Extent and  
 Obligation of this Law from the Explanation and  
 Descriptions given of it by learned Men.

- Id. L. 2. § 8. Thus *Hooker*: “ The Law of Nature is an in-  
 “ fallible Knowledge imprinted in the Minds of all  
 “ the Children of Men, whereby both general Prin-  
 “ ciples for directing of human Actions are compre-  
 “ hended, and Conclusions derived from them;  
 “ and it directs in such sort, that we must in all  
 L. 3. § 9. “ things for ever do according to it; for the gene-  
 L. 1. § 8. “ ral and perpetual Voice of Men is as the Sentence  
 “ of God himself: For that which all Men have at  
 “ all times learned, Nature herself must needs have  
 “ taught, and God being the Author of Nature,  
 “ her Voice is but his Instrument. By her, from  
 “ him, we receive whatsoever in such sort we learn.  
 “ Infinite Duties there are, the Goodness whereof is  
 “ by this Rule sufficiently manifested, altho’ we had  
 “ no other Warrant besides to approve them. St.  
 “ *Paul* says concerning the Heathen, *that they are a*  
 “ *Law unto themselves*; his Meaning is, that by the  
 “ force of the Light of Reason, wherewith God illu-  
 “ minateth every one which cometh into the World,  
 “ Men being enabled to know Truth from Falshood,  
 “ and Good from Evil, do therefore learn in many  
 “ things what the Will of God is: Which Will  
 “ himself not revealing by any extraordinary means  
 “ unto them, but they by natural Discourse attain-  
 “ ing the Knowledge thereof, seem the Makers of  
 L. 1. § 8. “ those Laws, which indeed are his, and they but  
 “ only the Finders of them out; whether they im-  
 “ port

“ port our Duty towards God or towards Man ;  
 “ and by Degrees of Discourse the Minds even of  
 “ mere natural Men have attain’d to know not on-  
 “ ly that there is a God, but also what Power,  
 “ Force, Wisdom, and other Properties that God  
 “ hath, and how all things depend on him.”

Bishop *Stillingfleet* says, “ That the Idea of God Orig. Sac. l. 3. c. 1.  
 “ is really imprinted on the Minds of Men, by that §. 6.  
 “ God whose Idea it is : And this Idea is a natural Id.  
 “ Result from the free Use of our Reason and Fa-  
 “ culties,” (which, with submission to his Lord-  
 ship, are as different Accounts for the same thing  
 as in nature possibly can be.) And again : “ There Id. §. 12.  
 “ is an indelible Idea of a Deity on the Minds of Id.  
 “ Men, deeply and universally planted ; and an in-  
 “ delible Character of himself printed by himself  
 “ upon the Soul.”

Archbishop *Tillotson* is full of this Subject in all Vol. 1.  
 his Works : “ Religion, *says he*, is a Property of Serm. 1:  
 “ our Natures, and the Notion of a Deity intimate P. 20.  
 “ to our Understandings, and sticks close to them :  
 “ And all Religion is founded in right Notions of Id. Serm.  
 “ God and his Perfections, infomuch that Divine 41. p. 485.  
 “ Revelation itself does suppose these for its Foun-  
 “ dations ; and can signify nothing to us, unless  
 “ they be first known and believed : So that the  
 “ Principles of Natural Religion are the Foun-  
 “ dation of that which is revealed ; and such Prin-  
 “ ciples are those Apprehensions which Men Id. Serm.  
 “ naturally have of the Divine Being and Per- 21. p. 224.  
 “ fections (the Immortality of the Soul, and  
 “ future Rewards of this Life, Vol. 3. Serm. 170.  
 “ p. 465) and the clear Notions of Good and  
 “ Evil, which are imprinted upon our Natures.  
 “ For there is an intrinfecal Good and Evil in Vol. 2.  
 “ Things, and the Reasons and Respects of moral Serm. 88.  
 “ Good and Evil, are fixed and immutable, eter- P. 663.  
 “ nal and indispenfable. Nor do they speak safely,  
 “ who

“ who make the Divine Will the Rule of moral  
 “ Good and Evil, as if there were nothing Good and  
 “ Evil in its own Nature antecedently to the Will of  
 “ God ; but that all Things are therefore Good  
 “ and Evil, because God wills them to be so.

Vol. 2.  
 Serm. 58.  
 P. 404.

“ There is a Natural Knowledge of God, and of  
 “ the Duty we owe to him, which the Apostle calls  
 “ that of God, which is obvious to be known by the  
 “ Light of Nature, and is as much as is absolutely  
 “ necessary for us to know. His Being and essential  
 “ Perfections may be known, which he calls his eter-  
 “ nal Power and God-head: These *are clearly seen, be-  
 “ ing understood by the things which are made, i. e.* The  
 “ Creation of the World is a plain Demonstration to  
 “ Man of the Being and Power of God ; and if so,  
 “ then God is naturally known to Men ; and such  
 “ natural Knowledge of him to be a Being of all  
 “ Perfections, is the surest and safest hold that Reli-  
 “ gion hath on human Nature.”

Id. p. 405.

Id. Serm.  
 48. p. 338.

“ There needs nothing more to make any thing  
 “ a Law, than a sufficient Declaration that it is the  
 “ Will of God ; and this God hath sufficiently sig-  
 “ nified to Mankind by the very Frame of our Na-  
 “ tures, and of those Principles and Faculties which  
 “ he hath endued us withal : So that whenever we  
 “ act contrary to these, we plainly disobey the Will  
 “ of him that made us, and violate those Laws

Id. p. 340.

Id. Serm.  
 57. p. 402.

“ which he hath enacted in our Natures, and writ-  
 “ ten in our Hearts ; which all the World, except  
 “ the Jews, were guided by, being a Light which  
 “ God set up in every Man’s Mind : And these Nat-  
 “ ural Notions which all Men have of God, if they  
 “ had in any measure attended to them, and go-  
 “ verned themselves by them, might have been suf-  
 “ ficient to have preserved them from dishonouring  
 “ the Deity.”

Id. Serm.  
 49. p. 346.

“ Natural Religion is Obedience to the natural  
 “ Law, and the Performance of such Duties as  
 “ natu-

“ natural Light, without any exprefs and superna-  
 “ tural Revelation, doth dictate to Men. Thefe  
 “ lie at the bottom of all Religion, and are the  
 “ great fundamental Duties which God requires of  
 “ all Mankind. Thefe are the fureft and moft facred  
 “ of all other Laws; thofe which God hath riveted  
 “ in our Souls, and written upon our Hearts; and Id. Serm.  
48. p. 341.  
 “ thefe are what we call moral Duties, and moft va- Id. Serm.  
49. p.  
 “ lued by God, which are of eternal and perpetual 344.  
 “ Obligation, becaufe they do naturally oblige with- Id. p. 346.  
 “ out any particular and exprefs Revelation from God;  
 “ and thefe are the Foundation of revealed and insti-  
 “ tuted Religion, and all revealed Religion does  
 “ fuppose them, and build upon them. And it is re-  
 “ vealed Religion that calls Men to the Practice of Id. 349.  
 “ natural Duties.”

“ And no one and conftant Reafon can be given Vol. 3.  
 “ for Univerfal Consent to thefe, but from the Serm. 170.  
 “ Frame and Nature of Man’s Mind and Under- P. 465.  
 “ ftanding, which hath the Notion of a Deity ftamped  
 “ upon it, or, which is all one, hath fuch an Under-  
 “ ftanding, as will in its own free Ufe find out a  
 “ God: So God’s revealing or declaring fuch a  
 “ thing to us, is no neceffary Argument that it is Vol. 2.  
 “ fo, unlefs, antecedently to this Revelation, we be Serm.  
 “ poffeffed firmly with this Principle, that *whatever* 58. p. 406.  
 “ *God fays is true; and whatever is known antece-*  
 “ *dently to Revelation, muft be known by natural Light,*  
 “ *and by Reasonings and Deductions from natural Prin-*  
 “ *ciples.* Thefe natural Notions of God are the  
 “ only Standard and Meafure to judge of Divine  
 “ Revelations, and of the Difference of Moral  
 “ Good and Evil.”

Mr. *Locke* fays, “ That God hath not left him- Effay H.  
 “ felf without a Witnefs, fince we have Senfe, Per- Underft.  
 “ ception and Reafon, and cannot want a clear l. 4. c. 10.  
 “ Proof of him, as long as we carry ourfelves about § 1. p.  
 “ us. 373.

“ us. Nor can we justly complain of our Ignorance,  
 “ since he has so plentifully provided us with the  
 “ means to discover and know him, so far as is ne-  
 “ cessary to the End of our Being, and the great  
 “ Concernment of Happiness; for he hath furnish-  
 “ ed Man with those Faculties which will serve to  
 “ discover all things requisite; and the Knowledge  
 “ of God is the most natural Discovery of human  
 “ Reason. It is within our reach; and we cannot  
 “ miss it, if we will but apply our Minds to that  
 “ as we do to several other Enquiries.”

L. 1. c. 4.  
 § 12. p.  
 31.

L. 1. c. 4.  
 § 17. p.  
 34.

L. 4. c. 10.  
 §. 6.

p. 374.  
 Vol. 2.  
 p. 46.

Dr. Clarke: “ That the Mind or rational Facul-  
 “ ty can no otherways avoid perceiving the natural  
 “ Dictates of Reason with regard to things present,  
 “ or its Judgment concerning what is past, or its  
 “ Apprehensions of what is to come, but by forcib-  
 “ ly withdrawing its Attention from this its pro-  
 “ per Object, and fixing it entirely and habitually  
 “ upon Matters of Sense; for by the Light of Na-  
 “ ture, the Being and Attributes of God were cer-  
 “ tain and demonstrable; the Probability of a fu-  
 “ ture State was great and undeniable; the Expec-  
 “ tation of God’s dealing mercifully with Sinners  
 “ was reasonable and hopeful; that the Law of Na-  
 “ ture is eternal, universal, and absolutely unchange-  
 “ able; for that certain moral Obligations, particu-  
 “ larly of Piety towards God, Righteousness to-  
 “ wards one another, and Sobriety to ourselves, na-  
 “ turally and necessarily arise from the eternal and  
 “ necessary Differences of things; and that all ra-  
 “ tional Creatures are obliged to govern themselves  
 “ in all their Actions by the eternal Reason of  
 “ things; forasmuch as such eternal moral Obliga-  
 “ tions are antecedent in some respect to the Con-  
 “ sideration of their being the Will or Command of  
 “ God himself.”

Vol. 1.  
 p. 8.

Vid Disc.  
 2d  
 Contents.

Dr. Fid-  
 des, vol.  
 2d p. 22.

Others teach, “ That the Law of Reason is that  
 “ inward and true Light, whereby alone the proper  
 Bounds



“ Bounds and Measures of Good and Evil are to be  
“ ascertained ; and that it is highly agreeable to the  
“ Goodness and Wisdom of God, that he should afford P. 25.  
“ us such a Measure of Light, as may be sufficient to  
“ direct us both in our Judgment and our Practice :  
“ But if we will not attend to the Light, or follow  
“ it, the Fault is not to be charged upon any Defect  
“ in it, but on an inexcusable Abuse of our own Li-  
“ berty and the Divine Goodness ; for antecedently  
“ to any positive Law or Declaration of God’s Will,  
“ Man had this Rule given him, whereby he was to  
“ conduct himself.”

The Reasons for this are assigned by several, Intellect.  
and thus by Dr. *Cudworth* : “ That the Divine System,  
“ Will, and Omnipotence itself hath no Imperium l. 1. c. 5:  
“ over the Divine Understanding; for if God un- P. 718.  
“ derstood only by Will, he would not understand  
“ at all.” And Laws depend not on the Will of  
the Commander, but on natural Justice and Morality,  
Equity, which give to one the Right and Au- c. 2. p. 18.  
thority of Commanding, and beget in another  
Duty and Obligation to Obedience. Nor is it the Id. 21.  
meer Will and Pleasure of him that commandeth,  
that obligeth to do positive things commanded, but  
the intellectual Nature of him that is commanded.  
For if even this were not morally good and just in  
its own Nature, before any positive Command of  
God, that God should be obeyed by his Crea-  
tures, the bare Will of God himself could not be-  
get an Obligation upon any to do what he willed  
and commanded, because the Nature of Things doth  
not depend upon Will, being not Things that  
are arbitrarily made, but Things that are—and  
every thing is what it is by Nature and not by Will. Id. p. 14.  
For when Things exist, they are what they are, 17. 16.  
this or that, absolutely or relatively, not by Will  
or arbitrary Command, but by the Necessity of their  
own Natures : There is no such thing as an arbi-  
trarious

trarious Effence, Mode or Relation; for an arbitrary Effence is a Being without a Nature, a Contradiction, and therefore a Non-Entity: The Modes of all subsistent Beings, and the Relations of Things to one another, are immutably and necessarily what they are, and not arbitrary, being not by Will but by Nature; Omnipotence or infinite Power itself being determined hereby; for Power has no Dominion over Understanding, Truth and Knowledge: And even the Will of God without Wisdom, is a plumbian flexible Rule. And tho' it be the Efficient Cause of all Things, yet it is not the Formal Cause of any Thing besides itself. And it is impossible that any Command of God should oblige, otherwise than by virtue of that which is naturally just, &c.

Intellect.  
Syft. Id.  
P. 719.

Morality,  
c. 3. P. 35.  
--15.

The Authorities here cited are very great, and perhaps which no one ought to dissent from without a Distrust of his own Opinion; yet every one's Judgment, after having carefully and impartially endeavoured to inform it, must be his own Director. It is as impossible to submit to the Dictates of others, or embrace for Truth what the Mind does not apprehend to be such, as it is to see with their Eyes, or hear with their Ears. And at the same time I may be convinced of the Error of one Hypothesis, without being able to suggest a better; or give such Arguments for the Certainty of what I would substitute in its place, as the Principles whereon it is founded may be capable of, and if justly stated might fully establish it. But to propose our Doubts with Caution and Modesty, in order to have them cleared up to the Satisfaction of our selves and others, can never prejudice the Cause of Truth, if the Method we inquire for it in, equally tends to the Establishment of Religion, and leads our Thoughts upwards to the Adoration of that Infinite Majesty, whose Glory is the ultimate Aim of all

all human Actions. No one will say that the Divine Wisdom could not have directed Mankind by different ways to the same End; and as Obedience to the Divine Will is the whole Duty and End of Man, whether he discovered his Will by Reason or Revelation, the knowing it to be such, makes it a Law to us, and his Commands will have the same Force and Obligation. But by which of these Methods he has been pleased to communicate it, is the Subject of the present Inquiry.

And here one cannot but observe, that most of our great Divines express themselves on this Subject, as if the Principles of Natural Religion were really Innate, though they were convinced of the Absurdity of such Notion, and the Inconsistency of establishing Rules which must not be questioned, and cannot be proved, but admitted as the unerring Deciders of Truth and Falshood. What could this proceed from but the Difficulties they met with, in lifting up the dim Taper of Reason to discover invisible Glories beyond the Stars? This made them so often recoil, relinquish Reason, and be willing the Controversy should be determined by an Oracle, or Judge, without any Authority but what they invest him with. To all which there is one unanswerable Objection, that were the Notion of God stamped by himself on the Minds of Men, the Impression would be a fair Transcript of his Nature; and it would be common to all Nations and Languages, as universal as our Senses and Passions, what no Distance of Time, or Difference of Education could alter or deface. But their original Supposition of these inward Impressions, Ideas, Furniture, &c. being absolutely false, therefore such must be all their Inferences from it.

I shall however understand them in another Sense, that the Duties of Natural Religion are so clear and evident to Reason, that whoever duly exercises those  
rational

rational Faculties wherewith every Man is endow- ed, cannot be ignorant of them ; but may find out some Principles from which they are to be clearly and solidly deduced, and thereby come at the Knowledge of the whole Religion or Law of Na- ture.

And from the above Description of it, we may collect both what it is, and whence attainable. *First*, That all moral Obligations depend on the Excel- lencies and Perfections of the divine Nature, conse- quently that before any Man can comprehend what they are, or can be obliged by them, he must disco- ver and establish a firm Belief of the Divine Exi- stence and Attributes. And from this Knowledge of God, which is the most natural Discovery of human Reason, we cannot miss finding out (if we will but apply our Minds to it) whatever is requisite to the End of our Being, and the great Concern- ment of Happiness, *i. e.* whatever is seemly or un- seemly, virtuous or vitious, good or evil, fit or unfit for us to do, in all the Instances of Duty we owe to God or Man ; and so it becomes a sufficient Declaration of the Divine Will, or what God requires of all Mankind. Natural Religion is nothing else but Obedience to the Natural Law, and it is called the Law of Nature, because there is nothing in it but what Man may find out, and be obliged unto by the mere Principles of Reason, without the Help of Revelation.

*Secondly*, That these Things are obvious to be known by the Light of Nature, may be proved from these three Arguments. 1. The express Testimony of Scripture. 2. The Works of Crea- tion. 3. The eternal Difference and Reasons of Things ; from all which these Obligations naturally and necessarily arise. These seem to be the great Foundations and Supports of Natural Religion, and shall therefore be separately examined.

But

But, *First*, We must consider whether the Law of Nature be in fact what it is represented to us: And in doing this, there cannot be a more unexceptionable Method, than to fix on some certain Marks and Characters, by which it is known and distinguished from others, or which constitute it what it is; and then examine, whether they can truly be affirmed of it. Now we find that all the great Maintainers of it agree in these three principal Characters.

First, That it is universal, or attainable by all Men.

Secondly, That it is clear; And

Thirdly, That it is perfect. If it has an unexceptionable Right to these Properties, we may rely upon it, as a safe Guide to God and Happiness: If it fails in any, or all of these, we may, and in justice ought to look out for another.

1. It must be universal or attainable by all; for the End of the Law being Obedience to what it requires, it must be discoverable by all those who are to be directed by it; and neither Law, nor any thing else can be called natural, that may not be equally affirmed of every Individual, not defective in its kind. If therefore Man be the Workmanship of God, and intended for Happiness; it must necessarily follow, that every Man in every Age has had sufficient Abilities, and proper Means granted him for the Knowledge of it. Because nothing can be a Law, or have an obligatory Power, further than it is capable of being apprehended, or known to him who is to obey it. For if the Sanctions of an unknown Law were to take place, Punishment would be necessary and unavoidable, which is not to be reconciled with infinite Justice and Mercy.

*Secondly*, It must be clear: So that whoever seriously endeavours to find out Truth, may not miss of, or avoid knowing it; for as nothing but a full Conviction of its being true, can make us receive

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it as the Law of our Beings ; so no Precept can be clear, which after due Consideration and Attention a Man does not discern the Truth of. If it be only probable, we must suspend our Assent, because where Probabilities are equal, the Judgment cannot fix its Choice. If it be doubtful, we must refuse our Assent; for we cannot believe what we do not know, nor know what we cannot tell whether it be true or false : And from that of which we have no clear or comprehensive Notion, we can make no clear or certain Inferences, and so can have no certain Evidence that we are under Obligation to Obedience. In such momentous Cases therefore as relate to the final End of Man, if the Law be not perspicuous, a Man may fall into Error, and yet not be chargeable with a Fault ; the Rule was not sufficient, and his Conscience will not accuse him for doing what he was not able to avoid. For if any thing we cannot know, or knowing cannot do, be a Condition of Happiness, we must be under a Necessity of being unhappy ; that being necessary, which cannot be otherwise.

*Thirdly*, It must be perfect, or contain whatever is requisite to Knowledge or Practice : And if all Men are not by Nature able to know the whole of their Duty, or whatever is necessary to regulate their Actions towards God, themselves, and one another, the Law would be imperfect, or not sufficient to the End for which it was instituted : a Man cannot be obliged but by some Law ; if that be deficient, and yet he under Obligation, he must be unavoidably ignorant of his Duty, or compelled to know, what he had neither Means or Power to come at the Knowledge of. And an imperfect Law is a Rule, and no Rule ; or in other words, a manifest Contradiction. Besides, if the Neglect of Duty subjects Offenders to Punishment, and the Particulars of Duty are not discoverable, then Punishment

nishment would be inflicted where no Fault has been committed, which is Injustice. But as where there is no Law, there is no Transgression; so there can be no Transgression, where the Law is not sufficient for our Guidance and Direction.

That these Properties must belong to this universal Law, is evident from the fundamental Principle of Nature, a Desire of Happiness. Every Being in Heaven and Earth aspires to its utmost Perfection and Good; and the Perfection of Man, as a moral Agent, must consist in the Practice of Virtue and shunning of Evil, and conforming himself as far as he is able to the Divine Excellencies, on which all Religion and Law depend. If Reason be not sufficient for this, if it is not able at all times to instruct all the Sons of Men in what is commanded or forbidden; if it cannot explicitly prove the Divine Existence, declare his Attributes, manifest his Will, and shew how all moral Duties derive their Obligation from them; then Reason is not of it self able to direct us to that Happiness whereof we are capable, what we naturally desire, and which constitutes the Perfection of our Beings; nor can any Law of its own Discovery be perfect, clear, or universal.

And let the Arguments to prove it so, be never so specious, yet if the Conclusions be contrary to known Fact, Experience, and the Observation of Nature, they cannot be admitted; if Impossibilities, they must be rejected; and to say a thing is possible for a rational Agent to do, which no such Agent with the utmost Perfection and Exercise of his Faculties ever did do, is scarce to be distinguished from an Impossibility. Nature is regular in her Actings, and suffers not her Powers to lie useles; never to do a thing, or not to have Power to do it, are with her equivalent Terms; and such are Faculties never exercised, or Means that never

proved effectual. And no Instance can be given of any Person, Nation, or Age, wherein the above Characters can be affirmed of the Law of Nature, that it was perfect, clear, and universal.

Another Fallacy that lurks under all the Arguments produced in favour of Natural Religion, is, the taking it for granted, that the Heathen World was utterly destitute of all the Benefits accruing from Revelation, which is absolutely groundless and false; or in concluding that what Knowledge the wiser Pagans had of divine Matters, they got it by the Light of Reason only, without any other Assistance or Instruction; which is contrary to Fact, History, and their own Confession: And if they deserve Credit in any Case, it must be in this; wherein Truth so far triumphed over that common Passion of Men, to have the Discoveries of important Things pass for their own, that they ingenuously tell us where and from whom they got the Information of them. And the whole Issue of this Controversy must rest upon these single Points, whether they had a competent or tolerable Knowledge of supernatural Truths, and whether the Knowledge they had of them was from their own Discovery or Experience: For it is impossible to do more by the Light of Reason than they did.

The Appeal therefore must be to them, as the only Judges capable of determining it. And as the Maintainers of the Natural Law constantly refer the Decision to them, I readily submit thereto, not doubting to make it appear, that in those Ages when there was as much Reason and profound Judgment as in any other Period since the Creation, their Knowledge in these Matters was strangely dark and defective, and the little Light they had was a borrowed one, not their own: And that for a long number of Centuries a barbarous Ignorance covered the Face of the Earth, scarce a Man (out  
of



of the *Jewish* Church) had so much as a Notion of God (except the Idea of an Idol be such) the Soul's Immortality, or a future State: And if so, Reason must be a very blind and insufficient Guide, where out of so many Millions of rational Creatures, in distant Ages and Countries, it could not direct above three or four to Truth and Happiness. It will also appear that wherever the traditional Notices of revealed Things were almost extinguished, Reason could never restore, or give any Account of them; even where the Names remained, the Explanation of them was abominable and ridiculous. Whereas had Reason once discovered these things, the same Procedure of the Mind would have been universally plain and obvious at all Times and in all Nations, which never was the Case. This shall be at large made out in the ensuing Parts of this Discourse.

And whoever will take a serious View of the Law of Nature in its true Light, the most important Duties quite obliterated in many Places of the World, strangely mangled and deformed in others, unable to influence or reform Mankind in any, cannot but suspect, that far more glorious things have been said of it, than in Justice can be granted to it. And such Doubts must be increased, on observing the many Exceptions its ablest Defenders are obliged to make from their own general Rules, and give up such Points as utterly destroy the Perfection and Universality of it.

I might instance in one for all, from the celebrated Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, whose very first Words are these: "The Foundation of Religion lies in that Difference between § 1.  
 " the Acts of Men, which distinguishes them into  
 " good, evil, and indifferent; for if there be such  
 " a Difference, there must be Religion, & contra.  
 " Upon this account it is that such a long and labo-  
 " rious

" rious Inquiry hath been made after some general  
 " Idea, or some Rule, by comparing the foresaid  
 " Acts with which, it might appear to which kind  
 " they respectively belong. And tho' Men have not  
 " yet agreed upon any one, yet one there certainly  
 " must be. That which I am going to propose,  
 " &c." Now may we not from hence justly argue,  
 that if the Foundation of Religion lies in the Difference  
 between human Actions; and that Difference  
 can only appear by comparing them with some Rule;  
 and yet from the Beginning of the World to this  
 Day, no such Rule of Moral Good and Evil has been  
 agreed upon, whereby Men might know to which  
 kind their Actions respectively belong, it is impos-  
 sible there should be any such thing as Natural Re-  
 ligion or Law, because their very Essence consists in  
 enabling Men to distinguish their Actions (and there-  
 by their Choice of acting) whether they are Virtues  
 or Crimes, morally good or evil; if they had no  
 Rule for this, they had no Law, and if no Law,  
 they could not have any Religion, which is nothing  
 but Obedience to Law: Or if they never agreed up-  
 on one, and without Agreement there cannot be a  
 Rule, then there is nothing in this Subject obvious,  
 clear, universal, or true; but all the Definitions of  
 it must be Opinion or Falshood, because they had no  
 Rule or Method to frame them by. Or (since a  
 Rule there certainly must be) if Mr. *Wollaston* found  
 it out, then all the preceding Ages wanted it, there  
 was no such thing existing, and it must be Mr.  
*Wollaston's* Religion, not Nature's. And if he  
 first made the Discovery, how could it be owing to  
 Reason, since the Light of that was as strong three  
 thousand Years ago as it is now? If it was not from  
 Reason that he argued so well, and traced out the  
 Lineaments of Law with such Order and Perspicuity,  
 then it must be from Revelation as a Christian, not

as a Philosopher ; which is the whole Truth of the Matter : And that single Passage tears up the Foundation of his whole Work, and is a Demonstration, that whatever he says after that, is not from Nature, Reason, Eternal Fitneses, or Universal Consent, but from the Gospel ; and that he only transferred to the Support of one School what he learned in another. And however specious a long Train of Propositions may appear to be, yet not one is applicable to the Intent of his Work, that Reason could delineate the Law of Nature ; since by his own Confession it appears, that Reason never could find out that Rule which is the Foundation of all Religion ; and consequently if Revelation had not discovered it, neither would Mr. *Wollaston*, nor any greater Genius yet to come.

But besides, there are, in my Opinion, several Reasons why the above Marks and Characters cannot belong to the Law of Nature ; why we ought not to subscribe to it as the most sacred of Laws, “ The  
“ very Ground-work that Revelation supposes, and  
“ is built upon ; the very Bottom of all the Duties  
“ which God requires of us : So that whatever God  
“ should reveal, would signify nothing to us, unless  
“ they be first known and believed.” Were this Supposition true, I must confess I do not see what it would signify for God to reveal any thing that was already well known and firmly believed ; Revelation would certainly then be useless, and it is the avowed Intent of Natural Religion to make it so. But besides the Falshood of this Supposition, there are many (and in my Opinion) strong and undeniable Objections against it.

Abp. Tillotson.

As, First, It must be an unquestionable Truth, that the Law of Reason cannot be ampler than Reason, nor any thing be allowed in its Religion, but what is discoverable by the natural and ordinary Use of it. The Bounds thereof must be fixed to those

Principles, which it can by its own Power clearly investigate, and to such Knowledge as may with Certainty be deduced from them, because no Effect can be more extensive than its Cause: Therefore this Definition of it must be false, that it contains every thing founded in the Reason and Nature of things; since the largest Understandings are ignorant of the Essence, Cause, Qualities, and Operations even of sensible things, and much more of immaterial ones, besides the infinite Relations that are in the System of the Universe: Therefore Truth, or the Law founded on such Relations, is more extensive than Reason, and what none but the Author of Nature can comprehend, or make known to others; and especially the Excellencies of his own Being, which must otherwise have been for ever hid from us: For can we know God but by his Attributes, and is there one Attribute we do, or can know? God is self-existent, but it is not possible for Man to form a Notion of Being from itself, *Ens à se*; nor of Eternity in Commencement, Duration, or Succession; nor of Omnipresence, whether by Multiplication or Extension of himself to every *Ubi*, or how a Spirit can be extended: We are ignorant what this Omnipresence is, or how God is or can be so. How then could we know it, if he had not declared it? That Reason should discover a Nature, not one Attribute of which it is able to comprehend, is truly incomprehensible. It is finding out something without knowing any thing of it. And without a clear Knowledge of the Being we are to worship, all Attempts will be in vain to find out the Duties he requires of us.

Secondly, Nothing can be admitted as Principles in any Science, much less in Religion, but what carry the highest Marks of Self-Evidence with them, what the Mind immediately apprehends and understands, or by seeing their Connexion with other undoubted

doubted Truths, assents to, as soon as duly proposed : For where there is Doubt or Obscurity in Principles, the Inferences drawn from them must be uncertain, and Man be in a perpetual Hesitancy which way he ought to act ; and if moral Actions ought to be uniform and consistent, the Rule of them must of necessity be so ; for otherwise it will prove a Snare instead of a Law. That the Heathens had no such clear Principles or fixed Rules Mr. *Wollaston* confesses, and that Sentiments of the most important Points were wavering and doubtful, the whole World acknowledges : And if they were furnished with Means clearly to discern and understand the Principles of Natural Religion, and Reason was that Means, how could it happen that all Mankind should be so unreasonable as never to make a due Use of it, to know so little, and perform much less ? And the wisest of them to be so divided in Opinion, and unable to determine in the most obvious Cases of Sin and Duty, and so constantly to mistake the one for the other ?

Thirdly, If there be any such clear and universal Principles, the Doctrines deducible from them will be equally perspicuous and clear : For when Reason finds out Truth, its Procedure is by establishing the Evidence of one Proposition, and then another which depends upon it, and so by proper Gradations, and the Use of intermediate Proofs, it arrives at others : And let the Train of Arguments be never so long, yet if the Mind perceive a clear Connexion between them, the Inference or Conclusion, which is the Truth sought for, must be as certain as any of the intermediate ones : Whoever therefore discover Truth in this manner, are able to prove it, and assign Reasons for it, because they can trace it backwards, and shew its Dependence upon some first clear and universal Principles. But if Men speak Truth, and yet can give no Reasons, nor account for it,  
they

they may have heard, or stumbled on it, but did not discover it, as not perceiving how the Evidence of it arises: For if they come at it by clear and intermediate Steps, the Certainty of the Conclusion might be proved to others, and rendered as perspicuous as the Truth and Connexion of the several Mediums. But there was not one spiritual Subject that the Heathens could prove, or give any tolerable Account of; therefore whatever Knowledge they had of such Truths, they did not discover, or come at it by any Operations of their own Reason.

Fourthly, No Principles can be allowed as universal, but what are proved so by Fact and Experience; Causes must be known by their Effects, and Natural Powers by their Productions: And to affirm, that a Man, or Star, or Spirit, or Angel, is capable of Acts which the most piercing Judgment never discovered, is highly unwarrantable; it is a Falshood, because we are ignorant of it. If there were then any such universal Principles, they must be shewed from the Effects: The same Tree will not produce Grapes this Year, and Figs the next. The Religion of distant Ages and Nations would have been correspondent, because its Principles were natural and universal. If it was various and contradictory, there could be no universal Rule or Principles to go by: Yet the Religions of the World were different and opposite, the most sacred with one was abominable to another. Nor is a tolerable System of Natural Religion to be collected out of any or all their Writings and Practice: Therefore no Universal Principles could subsist in the Minds of Men. And to say that Reason could, but did not, or would not do it, is only begging, not proving the Question.

Lastly, Both Law and Religion must suppose not only Abilities in them who are required to obey, but must offer proper Motives to induce them to it; for

for where there is no Motive for doing or not doing a thing, there can be no just Ground either to perform it or neglect it, it is quite indifferent. Now the great Motives to the Observation of moral Duties, confessedly are the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards or Punishments. But not one in a Million believed any of these things; and the few wise Men were too doubtful and uncertain about them, to let them have any due Influence upon their Actions: And therefore the Law of Nature was highly deficient in this most essential Point, if it can be called a Law, that has not this Sanction, or lays us not under an Obligation to Rewards or Punishments.

To prove that these Objections and the Inferences drawn from them, are strictly applicable to the Law of Nature, I need only appeal to the ablest Defenders of it. Thus *Tillotson*: “As the Cor-  
 “ruption and Degeneracy of Mankind grew worse,  
 “so the Light of Nature waxed dimmer and dim-  
 “mer, and the Rule of Good and Evil was more  
 “doubtful and uncertain, and that in very confi-  
 “derable Instances of our Duty. The Law of  
 “*Moses* was peculiar to the *Jews*: And even  
 “to them it did not give clear and perfect  
 “Light and Direction as to moral Duties, and  
 “those things which are of an eternal and im-  
 “mutable Reason and Goodness. That the *Jews*  
 “under the Law had such Apprehensions of their  
 “own Immortality, and of a future State of Hap-  
 “piness and Misery after this Life, as natural  
 “Light suggested to them; which was in most but  
 “a wavering and uncertain Persuasion, and conse-  
 “quently of small Efficacy to engage Men to  
 “their Duty.” Thus *Bishop Wilkins*. I. 2. c. 9.  
 “Notwithstanding all that can be said of *Natural*  
 “*Religion*, it cannot be denied, but in this dark  
 “and degenerate State into which Mankind is sunk,  
 “there

Vol. 2.  
 Sermon 51.  
 p. 361.

“ there is great want of a clearer Light to discover  
 “ our Duty to us with greater Certainty, and to  
 “ put it beyond all doubt and dispute, what is  
 “ the good and acceptable Will of God: And all  
 “ these Defects are clearly supplied by that clear  
 “ and perfect Revelation, which God hath made  
 “ to the World by our blessed Saviour.” Can  
 there be a stronger Affirmation, that Nature and  
 Reason are not able to instruct us in our Duty?

Where then could be the Law or Religion of Nature, where there were no plain or certain Rules and Directions for a good Life; no Rule of Good and Evil, but Men were doubtful and uncertain in the most considerable Instances of Duty, and wanted Light to direct them even in moral Duties, tho’ of eternal Reason and Goodness; or where was the Authority or Force of Law, which could offer no Motives to Obedience but such as were faint and languid, wavering and uncertain Persuasions, of small Efficacy to engage Men to their Duty? Certainly there is nothing here that deserves the Name of Religion or Law, not an Article that was clear, or a Motive that could influence.

Disc. II.  
 p. 156,  
 &c.

And Dr. *Clarke* in his celebrated Discourses at Mr. *Boyle’s* Lectures, acknowledges, “ There are  
 “ whole Nations, that seem to have very little No-  
 “ tion of God, and a very small Sense of the Obl-  
 “ gations of Morality. That in all Ages Men  
 “ had false and unworthy Notions of God, or su-  
 “ perstitious Apprehensions concerning him, and  
 “ fell into the most absurd Idolatry. That few  
 “ Men are able to discover the principal Truths of  
 “ Morality clearly and plainly for themselves; there-  
 “ fore want to be particularly taught and instructed  
 “ in their Duty. That in the Heathen World  
 “ there were but few (two or three) who studied  
 “ and practised the Duties of Natural Religion;  
 “ yet without any great Success, because the Doc-  
 “ trine



“ trine of most Philosophers consisted in empty  
“ Words and Contention, but did not amend the  
“ Manners, nor was fitted to reform the World;  
“ and those few had no Knowledge of the whole  
“ Scheme of Things, the Method of God’s go-  
“ verning the World, his Design in creating Man-  
“ kind, &c. Having no Knowledge of this, their  
“ whole Attempt to discover the Truth of Things,  
“ and to instruct others therein, was like wandering  
“ in the wide Sea, not knowing whither they were  
“ going, or which way to take, or having any  
“ Guide to conduct them; for their natural Un-  
“ derstanding was as unqualified to find out and  
“ apprehend these things, as the Eyes of Bats to  
“ behold the Light of the Sun, not even the first  
“ and most necessary thing of all, the Nature and  
“ Attributes of God himself; these were very diffi-  
“ cult to learn, and more difficult to explain. So,  
“ of the Manner in which God might be accep-  
“ tably worshipped, they were entirely and un-  
“ avoidably ignorant; for in what particular man-  
“ ner, or with what kind of Service he will be  
“ worshipped, cannot be certainly discovered by  
“ bare Reason; even *Socrates* fell lamentably into  
“ the Practice of the most foolish Idolatry; nor  
“ did they know how to reconcile and appease the  
“ Deity; here Nature stops, and expects with Im-  
“ patience the Aid of some particular Revelation.  
“ They are also most doubtful, uncertain, and un-  
“ steady about the most necessary Truths, the Im-  
“ mortality of the Soul, the Uncertainty of a fu-  
“ ture State, and the Rewards and Punishments  
“ to be distributed in a Life to come. *Socrates* at  
“ his Death, and *Cicero*, knew not whether the  
“ Soul was mortal or immortal; which is most pro-  
“ bable, was a great Question; but which Opinion  
“ true, God only knows; and what they were cer-  
“ tain of, such as Obligations of Virtue, and the  
“ Will

“ Will of God in Matters of Morality, they were  
 “ never able to prove and explain clearly and dis-  
 “ tinctly ; They rather made them Matter of En-  
 “ tertainment, than proving the plain, necessary  
 “ and indispenfable Obligation of them : For as  
 “ they were not able to frame any regular confifent  
 “ Scheme of Things, the Truths they taught were  
 “ fingle and fcattered, accidental as it were, and  
 “ hit upon by Chance, rather than by any Know-  
 “ ledge of the true State of Things ; therefore  
 “ could never make out upon what Principle Vir-  
 “ tue was to be chofen, and perpetually difagreed,  
 “ and contradicted one another upon that great  
 “ Queftion, What was the chief Good, or final  
 “ Happinefs of Man. And thofe things they  
 “ were able to prove, fuch as the moft obvious and  
 “ neceffary Duties of Life, they had not Autho-  
 “ rity to enforce ; becaufe they feemed to want  
 “ weight, and to be but the Precepts of Men ;  
 “ And it has by Experience appeared to be alto-  
 “ gether impoffible for Philofophy and bare Reafon  
 “ to reform Mankind effectually, without the Af-  
 “ fiftance of fome higher Principle. That extra-  
 “ ordinary and fupernatural Affiftance, without  
 “ which the Philofophers themfelves were fenfible,  
 “ there could never be any truly great Man ; and  
 “ therefore a divine Revelation was plainly want-  
 “ ing, and abfolutely neceffary to recover Mankind  
 “ out of their univerfal Corruption and Degen-  
 “ eracy ; and their chief Lawgivers thought it not  
 “ a fufficient Recommendation of their Laws,  
 “ that they were agreeable to the Light of Nature,  
 “ unlefs they pretended alfo that they received them  
 “ from God.

“ The modern Deifts therefore have much departed  
 “ from the Senfe of the ancient and wife Philofophers,  
 “ in contending that there was no want, no need  
 “ of Revelation ; that Philofophy and right Rea-  
 “ fon

“ son was of itself sufficiently able to instruct and  
“ preserve Men in the Practice of their Duty ; and  
“ that nothing was to be expected from Revelation;  
“ for there are several Truths not possible to be  
“ discovered with any Certainty by the Light of  
“ Nature: and it is certain in fact, that the wisest  
“ Philosophers of old were never able to do it to  
“ any effectual Purpose. And as to the great Pre-  
“ tence of the modern Deists, it is to be observed,  
“ that the clearest of moral Reasonings was much  
“ improved even in the Heathen Writers, after the  
“ Coming of Christ. And almost all things which  
“ are said wisely and truly by modern Deists, are  
“ plainly borrowed from that Revelation which  
“ they refuse to embrace; and without which they  
“ never could have been able to have said the same  
“ things. What ground have they to imagine,  
“ had they lived without the Light of the Gospel,  
“ that they should have been wiser than *Socrates*,  
“ *Plato* and *Cicero*, or made such right Use of their  
“ Reason, as to have discovered the Truth exactly,  
“ and not been involved in that Idolatry, which  
“ overspread the whole World? 'Tis one thing  
“ to see, that those Rules of Life, which are before  
“ hand plainly and particularly laid before us, are  
“ perfectly agreeable to Reason: And another  
“ thing to find out these Rules merely by the  
“ Light of Reason, without their having first been  
“ any otherwise made known. And after all, the  
“ Truth at the Bottom is plainly this: All the  
“ great things the modern Deists affect to say of  
“ right Reason, as to its Sufficiency in discovering  
“ the Obligations and Motives of Morality, is on-  
“ ly a Pretence to be made use of when they are  
“ opposing Christianity. At other times and in  
“ reality, they have no hearty Regard for Mora-  
“ lity; and however their Creed may pretend to  
“ be the Creed of Deists, yet almost always their  
“ Prac-

“ Practice is the Practice of Atheists : And their  
 “ Arguments against Revelation and Christianity,  
 “ in their not being universally owned and em-  
 “ braced, and consequently no real want of them,  
 “ or ground to think any farther Assistance neces-  
 “ sary to enable Men to answer all the Ends of  
 “ their Creation, than the bare Light of Na-  
 “ ture, will hold equally good against natural Re-  
 “ ligion, that neither was that necessary to enable  
 “ Men to answer the Ends of their Creation; be-  
 “ cause 'tis evident all Men are not endued with  
 “ the same Faculties and Capacities, nor have  
 “ they all equally afforded to them the same Means  
 “ of making that Discovery : Many Nations being  
 “ now ignorant and barbarous, and consequently  
 “ the Knowledge of Natural Religion being, in  
 “ fact, by no means universal; it will follow, that  
 “ there is no great Necessity even of that : But that  
 “ Men may do very well without it, in perform-  
 “ ing the Functions of animal Life, and directing  
 “ themselves wholly by the Inclinations of Sense;  
 “ and thus these Gentlemen must at last be forced  
 “ to let go all moral Obligations, and to recur  
 “ unavoidably to absolute Atheism.”

Can a more languid and desponding Character  
 be given than this of the Law of Nature? And are  
 not all the Objections I offered, allowed by the  
 ablest Defenders of it? Is it not an Abuse of Words  
 and Common Sense, to call such a disjointed Heap  
 of Fragments and Fable either a Religion or a  
 Law? Here we see a whole World involved in  
 Barbarity and Idolatry, the wisest therein ignorant  
 of their own final Happiness, or God's Dealings  
 with them, their whole Attempts to discover the  
 Truth of Things vain and fruitless, their natural  
 Understanding unqualified to find out or apprehend  
 even the Being of a God, the Immortality of the  
 Soul, &c. not able to prove the Obligations of

Morality, nor shew upon what Principles Virtue was to be chosen. The Truths they taught were scattered and disjointed Fragments, hit upon by Chance, not acquired by Knowledge; for they understood them not, neither saw their Connexion, nor could assign the Reasons of them; they had not Authority to enforce the most familiar or necessary Duties of Life; for they taught them as the Precepts of Men, but discerned not their Derivation nor Dependence on the Will of God: And on these Accounts they could not, without the Assistance of an higher Principle, either reform themselves or instruct others. The whole of Religion consists in teaching the End of Man, with the Means to attain it: But Nature never taught Man wherein his final Good consisted; and it is an Observation of *Cicero, Acad. 2, l. 1. de Fin. l. 5.* “that they who do  
“not agree in stating what is the chief End or  
“Good, must of course differ in the whole System  
“of Precepts for the Conduct of Life.”

How could Nature and Reason then (unable to conclude one Principle, or infer one Duty) be sufficient Guides to Happiness and God? How could the Author of Nature intend them for such Purposes? Or what can we believe of a Subject which the greatest of Men pull down with one hand, as fast as they build up with the other? but that it is dim, wavering, and uncertain, and something else plainly wanting, and absolutely necessary to direct Mankind, and influence them in the Practice of Duty? This is the Sum of all the Arguments in favour of Natural Religion: God gave Man Reason to discover a Rule and Law, but Reason never did it, or to no purpose. What is the Consequence, but that an ineffective Cause was the Appointment of infinite Power and Wisdom; and that Reason had a divine Commission to discharge, which it never

ver did, or could faithfully execute. Both which are impious and absurd.

But if Reason ever did, or possibly could perform the Miracles ascribed to it, there is another Difficulty occurs, without a full Solution to which the whole Superstructure vanishes into nothing: And that is, how the Dictates of mere Reason can obtain the Force of a Law, or have such an obligatory Power as to subject us to Rewards or Punishments? And this can only be inferred from the Authority whence Law arises; for the Effect cannot have more Power or Dominion than the Cause.

Clem.  
Alex.  
Strom. 1.  
p. 356.

And I would thus define Law: That it is a Rule of Life (Νόμος φῶς ὁδῶν) directing us by proper Means to the best Ends, and arm'd with Punishments for the Disobedient, and Rewards for the Obedient. For that cannot be Law which does not direct what is best, nor a Rule that does not point out proper Means to attain the End, nor obligatory without a Power to enforce it. And Law may be divided into Human, Natural, and Divine.

As to Institutions purely human, they may more properly be called Agreements than Laws, as being deficient in the End, Means, and Sanction. They were the Invention of latter Ages, after Men form'd themselves into Societies, and began to traffick, and were calculated purely to be subservient to these Ends. All Commerce at first was by Exchange of Goods, Cattle, and other Necessaries one with another; there was neither Law nor Money to regulate the Price of things, but every one made the best Bargain he could. When Coin was introduced as a kind of common Measure to adjust the Inequality of Value, it was from Compact or Law, not from Nature, and therefore called *Nummus* (from νόμος) Law, and stamped with the Impression of Cattle; and the Mulct prescribed by the ancient Laws was a Forfeiture of Cattle among the  
*Romans,*

Romans, and, according to *Strabo*, among the *Lutitanians* and *Albanians*. Such were the Beginnings of Law, and it has been remarked that *Homer* does not once use the Word νόμος. When single Persons prescribed Rules to Communities, they were called *Lawgivers*. Some made *Ceres* the Inventor of Laws, whence *Virgil* styles her *Legifera*; yet most were of *Æneid.* 4. a far later Date.

But the Question is, how Laws purely human can carry with them an Obligation, which is as it were the Soul of all Law? By Nature all Men are equal, nor has any one a Right to put Restraint upon the Body or Mind of another: Servitude has always been looked upon as preternatural. *Servitus est constitutio juris gentium, qua quis domino alieno contra naturam subicitur*, a Subjection to a strange Master contrary to the Order of Nature. So *Aristotle*, that to exercise such a Power, is *παρὰ φύσιν τὸ δεσπότην*, *Polit.* 1. to domineer contrary to Nature. And *St. Ambrose* will have it, that Drunkenness introduced Slavery, before which Liberty was inviolable; It never enter'd into the Thought of any Mortal to condemn to Slavery one Partaker of the same Nature with himself, nor was any Man so unreasonable and mad as to give up himself to obey the arbitrary Will of another. By Nature there is no Difference or Inequality, and he that is his own Master cannot be ruled or controul'd by another: Slavery is no more than a Subjection to Laws which we neither make nor consent to; and such a State whether entered on by Consent or Violence, being unnatural, carries no natural Obligation with it.

Secondly, As to *Natural Law*, there have been as various Opinions in deriving, as in defining or describing it.

1. Some have attempted to prove that certain Rights are natural to Men, because practised by other Animals, as Self-Preservation, and that of

L. 1. D.  
de Just. &  
Jure, &  
Init. de  
Jure Nat.

In Avibus.

their Species, by Beasts; Society and an orderly Commonwealth by Bees; Marriage and conjugal Amity by Doves, &c. And therefore they define the Natural Law to be in common to Beasts, Birds, and Fish, as well as Men. *Jus naturale esse quod Natura omnia animalia docuit, atque jus istud non humani generis esse proprium, sed omnium animalium quæ in terra, quæ in mari nascuntur, avium quoque commune esse.* But these Acts of Brutes, tho' sometimes called Laws, as of Birds by *Aristophanes*, ὀρνιθῶν νόμους, yet very improperly, as the Subject of Law must be Good and Evil, and Instincts are not capable of Guidance or Direction, as Passions are: Those natural Propensions of Brutes are their Rights, because from Nature; but are no more Law than the Actions or Motions of Vegetables, Trees, or other natural Bodies.

Even in Men these involuntary Propensions or Sallies are not the Effect of Reason, but a kind of natural Sensibility born with us, for which we are not able to account. If we see a Child falling into the Fire, our Heart is that moment touched, and we fly to help him; It is no Reflexion that determines us to this, or Thoughts of receiving Thanks from his Parents, but we act by a Motion purely natural. Here is no Time to deliberate, no Concurrency of the Judgment or Will, and an Action incapable of Reason and Choice cannot be subject to Law.

2ly. Some derive Natural Law from the Customs of Nations; but none of these were universal, therefore could not be the Law of Nature: For what is truly such, must have an unalterable Force and Obligation in all Places and Ages, as Fire has to burn, or Water to flow; the ὁ κοινὸς νόμος Common Law of Nature is an universal Judgment, therefore unchangeable: Customs are particular Opinions; and what perpetually varies, *Proteus*-like,

cannot





knew, or had so much as heard of these Things. *Plato* acknowledges the same thing, that they had no Gods but the Sun, Moon and Stars, *i. e.* the visible System. So that the Religion of *Greece* was without a God, without Worship; their Law of Nature without End, Means, Motives, or Obligation. And this was not peculiar to *Greece*, the Catholick Religion of the World was Atheistical Idolatry; their Manners Turpitude and Barbarity. And these only were entitled to the Appellations of Natural and Universal.

3ly. Some derive it from natural Reason, and the right Use of it among Men. And it is no wonder that the Heathen being ignorant of God, and the Method of coming at divine Truths, attributed many of them to Reason, as finding it in the Possession of them, and not knowing what other Original to ascribe them to. Yet notwithstanding the many great things they say of Nature, or Philosophy's being a sufficient Guide to Virtue, yet the wisest of them meant it not exclusively of the divine Assistance. So *Cicero*; *Multos & nostra*

Nat. D.

l. 2. n.

124, 125.

Differt. 22.

p. 265.

Cic. leg.

l. n. 3.

*civitas & Græcia tulit singulares viros, quorum neminem, nisi juvante Deo, talem fuisse credendum est— Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit; and Max. Tyr. δεινῶν τε ζουαγωγῶν τε θεῶν τε ἐξυλλήπιονος, &c. That Persons of the best Dispositions stand in need of the Assistance and Help of God to lead and impel them, &c. And therefore in this Sense we must understand many of their Expressions, *Nec est quisquam gentis ullius qui ducent naturam nactus ad virtutem pervenire non potest, &c.**

But as to the Use and Rule of natural or right Reason among Men; it is commonly asserted, that there are such common Notions and Apprehensions implanted in them, whereby every one finds an inward fixed Conviction and Determination, that Good is desirable, Evil to be avoided, that we ought

ought to live in a becoming manner, &c. From which Notions or Principles, a Mind not depraved, by its own rational Faculties forms Propositions, and Conclusions as certain as the Principles themselves. Therefore natural Law is often defined with *Aristotle*, *πανταχῆ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, καὶ ἢ τῷ δεῖν ἢ μὴ, quod ubique eandem vim obtinet, ἔστι non quia* Ethic. 1. 5. c. 10. *ita videtur vel minime, i. e.* what does not depend upon the various and uncertain Use of Opinions among Men or Nations, or on positive Laws contrived for the publick Good of Society; but on the constant and invariable Determination of those who act by right and sound Reason. So *Cicero*: Leg. 1. *Lex est recta ratio imperandi, &c.* The Law is right Reason, commanding or forbidding, and whoever is ignorant of it, whether it be any where written or not, is an unjust Person; and a little after, *Nos legem bonam à mala nulla alia nisi naturali norma dividere possumus, &c.* We cannot distinguish a good Law from a bad one by any other than a natural Rule. For not only Right and Wrong are discerned by Nature, but all virtuous and vitious Things: For common Reason, that which is coeval with our Minds, makes these things known to us; that what is honest and laudable should be accounted Virtuous, what is base Vitious. And it is Madness to think they are owing to Opinion, not to Nature. Many Passages are to be met with in *Cicero, Plato, Plutarch, Seneca*, and other Philosophers, as also among Civilians and Theologists, which will have the Laws of Nature to be placed in, or pointed out by, the right Use of Reason: That there are certain first Principles, from which many Corollaries or Deductions may necessarily be inferred, and the Law of Nature explicitly drawn and established. As in the Mathematicks, there are some Axioms, which every attentive Mind must

at first Sight acknowledge to be true, and from them other Propositions equally true may be concluded. So in moral Enquiries, after allowing some Principles, which must be universally and unavoidably true, such as Self-preservation, the Use of Things necessary for Life, the Conjunction of Sexes, Propagation of our Species, and other things usually called Good and Honest; there will arise from right Reason certain Commands and Prohibitions universally binding, by which that Good may be preserved, and the Contrary hindered. And conclude, that as Nature has abundantly provided for all other Cases and Wants, so especially must it in this, by suggesting whatever can instruct or enable us to lead our Lives becomingly, justly, and religiously. That some things are by Nature indifferent, neither required nor forbidden, in which Men are left at liberty to determine for themselves, as they shall judge most convenient, according to the Variety of Circumstances that may attend them. But there are other things so expressly commanded or prohibited by Nature, that no Dispensation therein can at any time be allowable; and that Man may thus by the Use of right Reason learn the exact Boundaries of Vice and Virtue, by the same Rule that he knows what is good and honest.

To judge rightly in this Case, we must consider that Reason and its Use are taken in two Senses: Either simply or without regard to the Authority and Declaration of any superior Being; or as it acknowledges such a Power, marking out the Bounds of Duty to us, declaring what is Good, and what is Evil. The first only is at present to be considered, and these two Remarks will I think follow from it: That the Use of Reason in Men is neither so certain nor consistent in the Discernment of these things, that what is best and most desirable

desirable can always appear from it. Or were it never so regular and constant, yet no legal Cause of Obligation could be thence inferred.

As to the Uncertainty which the free Use of Reason always laboured under in these Inquiries (to omit the Vulgar who may be always Strangers to it) it will appear both in the Origin and Subject of Natural Law; their wisest Men disagreeing in nothing more than whence proceeded the essential Difference of Good and Evil. *Archelaus*, the Master of *Socrates*, taught that things were just and unjust, not by Nature, but by Law. *Plato* tells us,

“ That in his Days the commonly received Opinion concerning Laws, was, that they were positive, not from Nature but Appointment; that the Gods themselves existed in their present Order, not by Nature, but from Determinations and Agreements of their own. That of good Things some were such by Nature, others by Law. But as for just Things there are none such by Nature, for that Men perpetually differed in Opinion about them, and were substituting new ones: But whenever they were appointed to be such, they became just from Law, and artificial Compact, not from Nature.” When *Alcibiades* asked *Pericles* what was Law? He answered, “ What the People ordain in a general Assembly, declaring what ought, and what ought not to be done.”

Diog. Laert. p. 99. Euseb. Præp. l. 12. c. 50. p. 622.

Xenophon. Mem. Soc. l. 1. p. 18.

When he inquired again, “ Whether they ordained what was Good or Evil, he replied, most certainly what is Good:” and positively declared, “ That whatever is the Ordinance of a legal Government, is Law, and consequently right.”

Diog. Laert. 4.

*Aristippus* taught, “ That nothing was just, or honest, or base by Nature, but only from Custom and Law; and that a wise Man might steal, or commit Adultery, or Sacrilege, when it was opportune, for none of these things were naturally  
“ vile,

“vile, and he need not restrain himself because of  
“the Opinion of a foolish unskilful Multitude.”

The Doctrine of *Diogenes* was to the same purpose ;  
and *Pyrrho* denied, “That any thing was in itself

“base or commendable, just or unjust; but that  
“Men did all things by Law and Custom, for

Id. p. 411. “one thing was not better than another.” This

Id. p. 669. Determination of Good and Evil entered also into  
the most sacred Parts of their Religion. It was the

Xenoph. great Rule of *Socrates*, “To adhere strictly to the

Id. p. 25. “Customs of his Country, and that to deviate  
“from them was a Token of Superstition and  
“Vanity.”

As to their Ethics, no one can be ignorant that  
the Disputes concerning Good and Evil, were num-  
berless among the Professors of right Reason, the  
Lawgivers, Priests, and Philosophers; nor was there  
any to compose or reconcile these Dissensions; so  
many Sects were there, and such a fruitful Harvest  
of Opinions, that in Philosophy, and that ground-  
ed on the strictest Reason, according to the utmost  
Abilities and Wit of those who searched into it,  
there were no less, as *Varro* observed, than Two  
hundred eighty eight different Sentiments about the  
*summum bonum*, or the final Happiness and End of  
Man; and consequently so many Religions, Laws,  
Means, and Motives among them.

They also who most professedly inquired into the  
universal Principles of living well, fell into separate  
Opinions and Schemes, each judging his own best,  
and condemning every other. Nay, so singular  
was Reason among Philosophers of the highest  
Class, that many things generally deemed to be  
contrary to the Law of Nature, they dared to as-  
sert were absolutely permitted and allowed by it.  
*Zeno*, *Chrysisippus*, and the *Persian Magi* held it lawful  
to lie with their Mothers, their Daughters, or with  
Men. Theft, Sacrilege, and Adultery were held  
lawful

lawful by *Theodorus*. All manner of beastly Lust by *Diogenes*; and *Plato* the divineſt of them all, allowed an almoſt promiſcuous Copulation, and would have Wives and all other things in common, as if the Law required it. *Archelaus*, *Ariſtippus*, and *Carneades* would not have any thing to be naturally juſt, but that whatever was eſteemed ſo, depended wholly on the Will and Appointment of Men. Numberleſs other Inſtances to this Purpoſe are to be every where met with in the Writings of the Ancients. Every one loudly affirms ὁ νόμος ἐστὶ λόγος ὁ ὀρθός, Right Reason is the Law, yet ſo vaſtly differ in what Right Reason is. Even when they ſeem to agree in the Fundamentals on which Laws were founded; when they come to interpret or apply them, they divide into many and contrary Opinions. “When any one, ſays *Socrates*, mentions Silver or Iron, we all underſtand the ſame thing by it; but when they ſpeak of what is Juſt or Good, they think in a different manner, and diſagree with themſelves as well as others.”

In Phædro.

Some, as the *Pyrrhonists*, *Scepticks*, and others, thought every thing ſo doubtful, and the Reaſons on both Sides the Queſtion ſo equal, that they ſuſpended their Aſſent, and concluded that Truth was no where to be found; ſo riveted were they to this Perſuaſion, that they would not believe common Notions any more than others.

On the whole it appears that great Caution muſt be uſed, that we do not too freely rely on the Diſquiſitions of Reason, which are ſo various and uncertain, that what one takes for a ſelf-evident Principle, or incontestable Concluſion, frequently appears to another equally ſagacious, as doubtful or falſe, and to be abſolutely rejected. That this often happened to thoſe maſterly Underſtandings of old, who argued with a free and unreſtrained Uſe of Reason, concerning the Nature of Good and Evil,

Evil, Honest and Dishonest, every one is convinced of who has but looked into their Writings. And the infinite variety of Sects and Schools, with the bitter Animosities that always subsisted among them, may sufficiently convince us, that their Laws sprang from Opinion, not from Nature.

But if Reason had been never so consonant in her Decisions, the Difficulty still occurs, how they would obtain the Force of a Law, or carry an Obligation with them.

Men may be here considered as separate Individuals, or as formed into Societies; under the first, which was the State of Mankind for many Ages after the Dispersion, they were in every respect by Nature and Condition equal, without Settlement, Society, Polity, or Law. The Fact could not be otherwise than as represented by the Ancients: That there was a time when Men wandered about the Fields like Beasts, sustained Life in a wild savage manner, and in their Actions never consulted Reason or Judgment, but only Violence and Strength of Body; Religion and common Notions were then every where much the same, as they now are at the *Cape of Good Hope*, or in *New Guinea*. But let it be supposed that from a more diligent Use of mere Reason, without any regard to the Authority of a Superior, they were gradually brought to lay aside this wild kind of Life, and agreed (but still preserving their Equality) to regulate themselves for the future by certain Articles and Laws, which they called Natural; yet what has this to do with what in any Propriety can be called either Duty or Obligation? Or if a few among them by a peculiar Strength of Mind, and long Observation, had hit upon some Universal Truths, yet they could not influence others who were at perfect Liberty to receive and believe them or not. Because no one has a Right to impose his Sentiments or Scheme upon

Plato Re-  
pub. 2.  
Cic. de  
Invent. 1.  
Laert.  
l. 5, &c.



upon another; or if they all became Philosophers, the Case would have been still worse, it being plain they never could or did agree in any System of Truth or Law. And no one had more Authority than another to determine who was in the right, and who in the wrong; or, what is the utmost that can be supposed, had they all concurred in the same way of thinking, in the Definitions of Right and Wrong, and particularly specifying what was reducible under those Heads, so as they absolutely judged it to be natural, without any Doubt or Controversy remaining concerning it, yet the Case had been still the same: For no Collections or Inferences by the bare Exercise of Reason, without any manifest Authority to guide it, could carry a legal Obligation with them. Mere naked Reason, as such, can only declare and persuade, but not command to the discharge of any Duty, except armed with the Authority of some Superior to him who is commanded, which is so essential a Property to every given Law, that it cannot subsist without it. And that any, or even one of these Men, perfectly equal, can be so obliged or commanded by the Reason of others, or their own (though none can command or prohibit themselves) or of all the rest, that he cannot alter his Opinion, or change it into the contrary, can be no more granted, than that all the rest should stand obliged by his single Opinion; for whence can proceed this Disparity in the Cause of Obligation, where all, as has been said, are equal, and not yet formed into a regular Society? The only Pretence for receiving a Doctrine, is, that it is true and agreeable to Reason, and on the same Account another may oppose or reject it, because it does not appear so in his Judgment; and neither one nor the other has a Right to Submission, because in this Case their  
Power

Power is equal, neither of them having the Sanction of a Superior Authority.

But let us suppose these very Persons, by mutual Consent to have united into a Body, and agreed not only on a common Rule of Life, but of Government also : So that now amongst them Princes are superior to Subjects, Laws formed by mere Reason, and Punishments enacted for Offenders. Yet, if some higher Right and Authority be not added, a Power superior to any Reason of the particular Members, by which Promises thus entred on can be preserved, by which Princes are to be obeyed, Compacts to be observed, and by which all collectively can be bound with stronger Fetters than the Opinion of Individuals, or vague Reason : How can it happen that any Obligation consented to by a private Person, may not, on the altering of his Judgment, be naturally and at will dissolved ? Or what can, or ought to prevent his withdrawing at pleasure from such Promise, Government, Compact, or Appointment of Punishments, in which they had consented ? He commits no Sin in this, therefore cannot be obliged to the contrary. For as an Equal can have no Rule over an Equal, so neither can they who were once Equals, from any Law mutually agreed on, or the Name of Duty grounded on such Agreement, be rendred so unequal, that every one cannot have the Liberty to renounce the Society into which he entred, or the Law to which he consented, unless some extrinsecal Obligation, different from themselves, confirm those Concessions and Duties they have entred into. Without this Men can never be restrained or kept within Bounds, it being evident, that whatever Obligation, or on whatever account, Men lay themselves under, they can legally dissolve the same, except some Authority superior to Man require them to continue so obliged.

obliged. And it is as impossible to be otherwise, as that equal Numbers, without an external Addition or Subtraction, should become unequal. And hence in the Doctrine of the ancient Heathens, the Gods themselves were not obliged to the Observance of a voluntary Promise, without swearing to it by the River *Styx*, and the Name of a superior Deity.

*Dii cuius jurare timent & fallere numen.* Virg.

4<sup>th</sup>. Others derive the Law of Nature, or the Universal Law, from the Authority and Appointment only of the Author of Nature. The Law is that, which from the Creation of Nature and Things has been common to, and required of all Men: And what from the Beginning has been shewn and commanded to all Human Kind, could neither take its Rise, nor have Authority from any other than the great and holy Author of their Beings: His Power alone could restrain their Liberty, induce an Obligation, or rightfully punish the Violators of it.

Without Law Man must be in a State of Liberty; & *libertati proprium est, sic vivere ut velis*, “the very  
“Notion of Liberty is, to live as we list.” Nor  
can any thing restrain us, but Violence or Law; with the former we have nothing to do. And Law is a just Rule of Acting, whereby our Freedom is withheld to do nothing but what that directs, and avoid every thing which that forbids, in Obedience and Duty to the Will of him who has a just Right and Authority to command it. From hence proceeds the Obligation, or that Bond of Law whereby we are necessarily engaged to the Observance or Omission of any thing: So that as by the Law itself there is occasioned a Difference of Good and Evil, in Things or Actions, from the Commands or Prohibitions of the Law; so hence arises an Obligation or Duty to perform some Office, which is the first  
Re-

Cic. de  
Off. L. 1.

Relation between us and Law : And to such Obligation necessarily adheres a Subjection to Punishment on the Violation of it ; for Law is a restraining the Power of doing what we list ; but Law, without a Power to punish, cannot induce such Restraint : Therefore all Offenders must be under an Obligation to Punishment, by the same Necessity that they are subject to Law ; as the undergoing Punishment, whether satisfactory, purgative, or expiatory, is nothing but the Retribution, Release, or Discharge appointed or required by the Law. None of which things could possibly be, were not Law an Injunction of a superior Power.

Thus in all well-regulated Politics, the Wisdom of the Legislature appears, in forming Laws suitable to the Exigences of Time and Place, so as they may best tend to the Happiness and Security of the People: Yet the Obligation to obey such Laws arises not from their intrinsic Goodness or Expediency, but from the rightful Power of the Enactors.

Conformably to this, in the great Commonwealth of the World, where all things are directed to their best Ends, by the Counsel of an Eternal Mind ; his Decrees must be such as his Will is, and his Will as his Nature, that is, infinitely perfect. By unerring Justice they are fitted to the Capacities of those who are to observe them, and by unconfined Goodness framed for their Advantage and Happiness : And whichever way the Laws of God are communicated to us, we obey them not for their own sakes, but because they are his Will, whose Right to Obedience is prior to any other Consideration. And notwithstanding the many Prejudices conceived against it, it always has been, and will be the soundest Rule in Divinity, that the Wickedness of an Action consists in its being forbidden by God, without Regard had to the Distinction of Natural or Positive Laws.

For nothing can possibly be a Law, but the Will of one who has a just Right and Authority to demand Subjection, with Power to enforce it; another may give his Advice, but cannot direct, nor without Violence compel. And wherever there is Subjection, it must be to a Superior, for nothing can be subject to itself; and as nothing is superior to Man but God, therefore the End of all Law, obligatory to Man, is to bring him into Subjection to the Will of God. This Will alone can determine his Reason, bind his Judgment, and direct him, by proper Means, to his final End; which End also being supernatural, is not from Nature, but from God.

Again: Man, as a Creature, is dependent; for Independence is the Prerogative of the Creator; and if dependent, subordinate; if subordinate, in a Rank below one or more Causes, the Supreme of which must be superior in Dignity, and have Jurisdiction and Authority over all: For every Second Cause owes its Being to, and is absolutely dependent in Nature and Operations on the precedent One, as all are on the Supreme; it being essential to a First Cause to be Independent, Self-being, and Self-sufficient, in which all Existence and Power are originally lodged, and from which all others derive, and depend upon for, both Being and Sufficiency: Therefore to be subject and dependent, is essential to a Created Being, the Virtue of an inferior Agent being only an Emanation of Virtue from a superior one. And all Subjection requires Obedience, it being the Law of subordinate Natures to obey, according to the Sphere of their Activity, the Will of the First; which having absolute Dominion, founded on Omnipotence and Supremacy, has a Right to absolute Obedience: And consequently, all second limited Causes and Beings must be obnoxious

to his sovereign Pleasure : Such is their Nature, and therefore the Law and Perfection of it.

This is the great Relation betwixt Creator and Creature, Absolute Dominion and Absolute Subjection ; and as no Creature can be made exempt from the former, so it never can be exempted from the latter. And this is the Foundation of all Law and Obedience, to be subject to the Pleasure of another, who has an absolute Disposal of those under his Dominion. Dominion on one hand, and Subjection on the other, are included in the very Notion and Essence of Law. Therefore among Individuals, where there is a perfect Equality, there can be neither Dependence, Subjection, nor Law : No created Being can give Law to itself, any more than it can be the Cause of itself, but must receive it from that Cause which gave it Being and Operation. Dependence is essential to a Creature, and Law is the Rule of that Dependence or Obedience : And there is no Authority in Law, but what proceeds from the Declaration of such sovereign Will and Pleasure.

The same Argument will equally hold good as to the other most essential Part of Law, the Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments, which are the Support of all Government both in Heaven and Earth. Hence *Macrobius* says of the Heathens,

In Somn.  
Scip. l. 2.  
ult.

“ That because all Laws are imperfect which have  
“ not Punishments annexed, this made them con-  
“ demn all Violators of them to *Tartarus*, where they  
“ should undergo Torments for many Ages, before  
“ they sufficiently expiated their Crimes, and fi-  
“ nished the due Purgation.” And *Grotius*, *In le-*  
*gibus sanctio dicitur ea pars, quæ sanguinem delinquentis*  
*legi consecrat* : “ In Laws, that Part is called Sanc-  
“ tion, which consecrates the Blood of the Delin-  
“ quent to the Law.” So that a Lawgiver must  
be one who when he wills and commands, wills Pun-  
ishments

nishments also ; without which Law would be no more than a Petition or Intreaty, and Obedience a voluntary Compliance, which every one might offer or refuse at pleasure, being finally accountable to none but themselves : Because there is no enforcing Principle, except Reason could oblige or compel itself, *i. e.* at the same time be Cause and Effect, be Dependent and Independent, Superior and Inferior, which are manifest Contradictions. Such Principle therefore must be extrinsick to the Mind, because nothing can restrain a natural Liberty, but a superior Authority, nor judicially punish Offenders, but a legal uncontrolable Power : And over Man there is no such Power, but of God. For to punish without a Right to do it, is Injustice, Tyranny, and Cruelty ; and where there is no Superior, there is no Difference or Authority, neither Law, Subjection, nor Bond of Obligation (every one is a Rule to himself) and consequently neither Rewards nor Punishments.

And yet we have seen, that in the *Gentile* World (notwithstanding the Name of a *Tartarus*) the Truth of final Rewards and Punishments was so far called in Question, that some wholly exploded them as a Dream of the Poets. They were rendred to all doubtful and uncertain by the Disputations of the wisest Philosophers that ever lived ; and they who did believe them, had such obscure Notions of their Nature, mixed with such fabulous Fictions and Stories, that they had no Force to influence the Actions or the Lives of Men : And consequently the Religion of Nature wanted the most essential Part, the strongest Tie and Bond it could have on the Minds of Rational Creatures ; for not only the Foundation of all Religion, but the most weighty Motives to Obedience, are the Existence of God, that he is a Rewarder and Punisher of Men, and that the Soul is immortal. All Obligation to Obedience neces-

family supposing the Existence of such a Being as hath Power to command us ; and the Motives engaging Men to the Practice of Religion, must suppose the Certainty of a future State, and our subsisting in it. As where Men have no Motives to induce them either to do or avoid a thing, they can have no just Ground or Reason either for doing or avoiding it, it is perfectly indifferent, nor ought Guilt to be charged, or Punishment inflicted on them.

Reasorab. of Chrittianity, p. 275. Mr. *Locke* acknowledges the Truth of this Argument. “ Those just Measures (*says he*) of Right and Wrong, which Necessity had any where introduced, the Civil Laws prescribed, or Philosophy recommended, stood not on their true Foundations. They were looked upon as the Bonds of Society and Conveniences of common Life, and laudable Practices. But where was it that their Obligation was thoroughly known and allowed, and they received as Precepts of a Law, of the highest Law, the Law of Nature ? that could not be without a clear Knowledge and Acknowledgment of the Law-maker, and the great Rewards and Punishments for those that would or would not obey them.”

Thus in every Branch of Religion or Law, we must ascend to a First Mover ; they are neither of them innate or self-originated, therefore subordinate : And all Dependencies must be traced up, and ultimately referred to some necessary Being, who has Universal Empire and Dominion.

All the Distinctions of Good and Evil, as to Man, refer to some Principle above himself ; for were there no Supreme Governor and Judge to reward Good and punish Evil, the very Notions of Good and Evil would vanish away : They could not exist in the Minds of Men, if there were not a Supreme Director to give Laws for the Measure thereof ; for it is from having the Will of a Supreme Law-maker  
for



for our Rule, that we call an Action good or evil, Sin or Duty, as 'tis commanded or forbidden by him. This even *Aristotle* could determine, "That Ethic. L. 2. c. 1. the Will of a Law-giver is such, that they who "act not according to it, sin." And a greater than he says, *But for the Law I had not known Sin.* Tho' by Natural Reason, or the Customs of the World, he had disliked many Actions; yet till the Law declared it, he could not call any thing a Sin. And if *St. Paul* could not, neither could the *Gen- tiles*. Nature could not instruct him in the Differences of Good and Evil; for it is only by comparing Actions with the Law, that Men can pronounce them to be Duties or Sins. So again *Mr. Locke*: "If I have the Will of a supreme invisible Law- Essay H: Underst. L. 2. c. 28. § 14. 15. maker for my Rule, then, as I suppose the "Action commanded or forbidden by God, I call "it Good or Evil, Sin or Duty; it being their "Conformity to, or Disagreement with some Rule, "that makes them to be regular or irregular, good "or bad. Thus Duelling, when considered in Re- "lation to the Law of God, will deserve the Name "of Sin; to the Law of Fashion in some Coun- "tries, Valour and Virtue; and to the Municipal "Laws of some Governments, a Capital Crime."

Nor would Rewards or Punishments be effectual Sanctions of Law, if they were not distributed by a righteous and omnipotent Judge. No one trembles or fears but from the Apprehensions of a Deity; for the Law of Man cannot reach the inward Mind and Soul, as having no Dominion over them; nor is armed with Authority to take a final Vengeance. The Punishment of human Laws may be undergone without Shame or Terror: It must be something greater than Man, that can arrest the Conscience, and fill it with Convulsions at the Dread of never-ceasing Misery, and falling into the Hands of the Living God, who shall pass Judgment upon all

Men according to their Works. For this Reason, says *Lactantius*, L. 3. c. 27. "the Precepts of the  
 "Philosophers, tho' many of them were right, had  
 "no weight, because they were human, and want-  
 "ed a divine Sanction."

Locke's  
 Essay, l. 2.  
 c. 28. § 5.

Nor could there be any such thing as a Moral Action, without supposing a Law from the Supreme Being; "Morally Good or Evil being only the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law, whereby Good or Evil is drawn upon us from the Will and Power of the Law-maker." Moral Good is when, notwithstanding the Liberty of our Will, yet having a free Principle within us of determining our Actions upon proper Motives, we choose to govern ourselves, and act by the Rule given us, when we were at liberty to have done otherwise: For the only End of Liberty is to make us capable of Laws (which they are not, who are under Compulsion or Natural Necessity) and in consequence of them, of Rewards and Punishments. Without these, Liberty and Choice were good for nothing, and without regard to a Law, have neither Use nor Purpose. This different Manner of Approach to God distinguishes us from Beasts, who being determined by mere Instinct, are not capable of Choice, and therefore not of having a Rule given them.

The wisest Heathens also, notwithstanding the many great things said of Nature and Reason, derive the Origin, Obligation, and Efficacy of all Law from the Gods alone; and especially Religion, or those Services and Acts of Worship wherewith the Gods would be honoured, which was the highest of Laws, they perpetually acknowledged to be wholly of Divine Authority.

*Xenophon* always presents *Socrates* under this Character: "That he was so pious as to do nothing  
 Mem. loc. L. 4. "without the Advice of the Gods; and if any  
 Doubts

“ Doubts arose what the Will of the Gods was, or  
 “ which way Men ought to act, his constant Ad-  
 “ vice (in which *Cicero* afterwards copied him) was  
 “ to go to the Oracle for Instruction.” And he gives  
 this Description of Religion and Piety: “ A pious  
 “ Man is one who serves the Gods, not in what  
 “ manner he pleases, but as the Laws made for that  
 “ purpose direct; and he who keeps these Laws will  
 “ know how he ought to serve the Gods; and he  
 “ who knows the Laws which ought to be observed  
 “ in the Service of the Gods, will serve them ac-  
 “ cording to the Laws; and he who serves the Gods  
 “ as the Laws direct, serves them as he ought; and  
 “ he who serves the Gods as he ought, is pious:  
 “ And thus have we the true Definition of a pious  
 “ Man.”

Such were the Sentiments of the most virtuous Per-  
 son in the Heathen World: That no one can of  
 himself find out the proper Worship of the Gods;  
 he must know the Laws which contain their Will,  
 and what Services would be acceptable to them; and  
 these Laws were given by the Gods, which is all I  
 contend for. In the modern Language it would  
 stand thus: The Religion of *Socrates* was the Reli-  
 gion of Nature; but the Religion of *Socrates* de-  
 pended on the positive Laws and Communication of  
 the Gods, therefore so does the Religion of Nature.

*Plato*, tho' he knew not the true God, saw the  
 Necessity of this Doctrine, and is full of it; assur-  
 ing us, “ that no Mortal can make Laws to purpose; Rep. 4.  
 “ and that the first Institution of them belongs not 427.  
 “ to us, but the greatest, best, and first legal ones  
 “ belonged to *Apollo* at *Delphos*.” And he commends  
*Minos* for having a secret Communication, for the *Minos*, p.  
 Space of nine Years, with *Jupiter*, as with a So-319.  
 phist, to be instructed in the right framing of Laws,  
 and adds, that *Sparta* enjoyed constant Prosperity  
 after she began to use them *ἀτε θεῶν ἐστὶ*, as being

divine ; for the Sceptre (or Laws) of *Minos*, was nothing else but the Instruction of *Jupiter*, ἡ δ' ἐν ἄλλο εἶναι ἢ τὴν παιδείαν τῆ Διός, which agrees with the common Opinion of the Legislators having their Decrees from God, ὁ παρὰ Διός Νομοθέτης. *Epicharmus* affirmed, that the Divine Reason had invented all Arts, and taught the Use to be made of them ; That Men never had invented any, it was the Gods that did it, and the Reason of Men proceeds from that which is divine. Even *Hesiod* would have the Law of Man to be from the Gods.

Τόνδε γδ' ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων.

*Demosthenes* gives this Reason why all Men ought to obey Law, because it is ἔυρημα καὶ δῶρον Θεῶν, *the Invention and the Gift of God*. And the *Athenians*, though they looked upon *Ceres* as the Inventor of all Laws, yet they distinguished her Mysteries by the higher Title of θεομορφία, *quasi divinæ legis latio* ; for θεομῶς, says *Hesychius*, is νόμος θεῶν, *a divine Law*. *Cicero* is frequent to this Purpose, that the chief and ultimate Law was, *Mens omnia ratione aut cogentis aut vetantis Dei*. And again, *Lex vera, ratio est recta summi Jovis. Et Deus legis hujus inventor, disceptator, lator*, as I shall elsewhere more largely shew. So after him *Plutarch* ; “ That if we may conjecture at these things, Justice cannot be so properly said to sit by *Jupiter*, as that he is the most ancient and perfect “ Rule and Right of all Laws.” And he relates, that *Lycurgus* being about to frame his Laws, consulted with the Oracle of *Apollo*, in order to establish good ones in his Country ; and they were so revered in After-ages, that the judicious *Polybius* says, they were in his Opinion rather the Invention of a God than a Man.

These Testimonies may suffice to shew the Opinion of the wisest Heathens on this Head : And why

Euseb.  
Præp. L.  
12. c. 2.  
Cl. Alex.  
Strom. 5.  
p. 605.

Orat. 1.  
adverf.  
Aristogi.  
ton.

Leg. 2.  
Rep. 3.  
apud Lac-  
tant. L. 6.  
c. 8.

Ad Prin-  
cip. In-  
doct.

L. 6.

why all their Legislators pretended to deliver nothing but what they had from Heaven, *viz.* To arm their Laws with that divine Authority which alone could carry Obligation with it, as it was what no human Reason or Power had a claim to. Hence *Zoroaster* among the *Persians* and *Bactrians* attributed his Laws to *Oromazes*; *Trismegistus* of the *Egyptians* to *Mercury*; *Zamolxis* of the *Scythians* to *Vesta*; *Charondas* of the *Carthaginians* to *Saturn*; *Minos* of the *Cretans* to *Jupiter*; *Draco* and *Solon* of the *Athenians* to *Minerva*; *Lycurgus* of the *Spartans* to *Apollo*; *Numa* of the *Romans* to *Egeria*, and *Mabomet* of the *Arabians* to *Gabriel*.

If we enquire of the *Jews* (and they for many Ages were the only School of true Theology and Learning in the World) we shall find them unanimous in Opinion, that the Law of Nature could not possibly be grounded on the Determinations of Reason, because of its Inconstancy and Uncertainty; and that it could not induce an Obligation, without some superior Authority, to which it must be subject; but was shewed and commanded to Human Kind by the great Author of their Beings, and which they called the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*. This they affirmed to be universal, natural Law, the true and living Sacrifices of the Mind, not peculiar to any Nation, Sect, or Family, which none however holy or distinguished could challenge as their own, but given as a Rule in common to the whole Race of Men (which by being universally dispersed and approved, was said by the Heathens to be engraven by their *Jup. Opt. Max.* on the Minds of Men) that hence it became obligatory on Human Nature, and through all Ages; from this proceeded all those universal Duties, together with that moral and civil Philosophy, by which the whole Race of Men from their Entrance into the World are bound, both towards the Supreme Being, and towards one another ;

another; as containing a perfect Rule of Duty, Worship, and whatever God required of them. That these were before the written Law, and every where binding, appears from the Book of *Job*, where in most of the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah* or the Natural Law are to be found, as against Idolatry, c. xxxi. v. 26. against Blasphemy, i. 5. against Murder, xxxi. 29. and xxiv. 14. against Adultery, xxxi. 9. and xxiv. 15. against Theft, c. xxiv. and xxxi. 7. and of Judgment, in the Passages of Idolatry and Adultery, besides the reverential Acknowledgment of God, his Providence, &c. and a pious Worship of him by Prayer and Sacrifice. That the written Law was only a Repetition of them, with an Addition of some things peculiar to themselves. So *Grotius* says, that *Moses* did not enlarge on the Precepts of *Noah*, because they were known to all Mankind. These Precepts were by Gods Command transmitted to Posterity; but after the Dispersion they became much impaired and obscured; and a dark Night of Ignorance and Barbarity covered the Earth. Even where the Names of God, Creation, Duty, and Sin remained, the Nature and true Reasons of them were absolutely forgot: So that it was justly said, *Iste Tullius rem vidit, causam nescivit.*

De Jure  
Belli ac  
Pacis, L.  
I. c. 2.  
§ 5. p. 21.

Augustin.

And this not only agrees with the *Mosaick* Account, but with that of the Heathens. Nothing can be more express than *Plato*, “ That after a certain  
“ Flood, which but few escaped, on the Increase  
“ of Mankind, they had neither Letters, Writing  
“ nor Laws, but obeyed the Manners and Institutions  
“ of their Fathers as Laws; that when Colonies separated from them, they took an Elder for their  
“ Leader, and in their new Settlements retained the  
“ Customs of their Ancestors, those especially which  
“ related to their Gods, and thus transmitted them to  
“ Posterity; they imprinted them on the Minds  
“ of their Sons, and they did the same to their Children;

Leg. 3.  
p. 680.

“dren ; by which Means when Colonies were greatly multiplied, each preserved its peculiar Laws, approving their own, and disliking others. And this, says he, was the Origin of Right, Laws, and the different Forms of Government.”

Nothing can be more explicit: Yet was it no Device of his own, but the truest Account of things he could meet with in the different Seminaries, to which he applied in the Search of Wisdom. And such he acknowledges was the Method of his coming at all divine Truths. If he speaks of the Origin of the Creation, he has only received τ' ἐικότα Timæus p. 29. μύθον, some probable Tradition or Fable concerning it. If of the Immortality of the Soul, it is λόγος θεῖος τινός, Phædo. 85. Phileb. 17. from some divine Word. If of the Gods, it is, They delivered it to us ; or else ὡσπερ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, Leg. 2. 715. as old Tradition certifies ; This, and not Nature and Reason, was the Ground of all his Knowledge. And when he attempted to assign Causes or Reasons for these supernatural Subjects, some he obscures instead of illustrating ; and in the Manner of handling them all, shews that he was a Stranger to the Bottom and the Truth of Things.

Hence we plainly see from what Fountain those active Principles, contained in the inward Law of Conscience, were derived, and properly called κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, *Common Notions*, as passing from the same Root, through all the Branches of Mankind ; and how the Notices of Good and Evil were transmitted from Generation to Generation. These and nothing else were the καταλήψεις, *Comprehensions* of Zeno, as containing the first Principles of Knowledge: the προλήψεις, *Anticipations, Presumptions or Presuppositions* (as concluding a previous Formation of them in the soul) of *Epicurus* ; and the ὀρθὸς λόγος, *Right Reason*, or Law of Nature, as containing the several Traditions of the Universal Moral Law,

Stobæus de  
Virtu.  
Ser. 1.  
P. 9.

Ad Prin-  
cip. In-  
doct.

Law, which were scattered through the World ; and not knowing how their Minds became possessed of them, vainly attributed them to an internal Growth and Culture. As also what the Meaning of those Expressions is, ἔστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὸ ὀρθὸν λόγον σύνταξις, καὶ ἁμαρτία παρὰ τὸ ὀρθὸν λόγον παράβασις, &c. *That Virtue is a Conformity to Right Reason, and Sin a Transgression against Right Reason, &c.* That they cannot be intended of any natural Light, but of the Principles of the Universal Moral Law, taught and treasured up in the Mind and Conscience : And the very Out-lines of these great Truths were so consonant to the Dictates of Reason, the Apprehensions of Nature, and of such vast Importance, that they easily obtained Reverence and Awe with all that were instructed in them, and to be looked upon (as *Plutarch* writes) the Rules of all both Mortal and Immortal : Not that which is written in Books, or engraven on Wood, but the living Reason in a Man's Heart, always alive and watchful together with it, never suffering the Mind to be without a Director.

And as these were less or more preserved or collected, was the Law in proportion perfect or imperfect ; as according to the Degrees of Knowledge and Intention must the Moral Evil of their Actions be aggravated or alleviated. And on this Account were the Gentiles a Law to themselves, having some of these common Notions or Principles in their Minds ; they judged some Things to be lawful, and fit to be done, others unlawful, and what ought not to be done : Which inward Judgment and Persuasion of Conscience, superinduced upon them the utmost legal Obligation they were capable of, in the Circumstances they were under. For their Minds being dark and their Hearts hardened, had horridly depraved the Law of their Being, and so far departed from the Purity and Perfection



fection of their Nature, as to be *subject to the Law of Sin and Death*. Because the carnal Mind is Enmity against God: For it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7. Yet as without the Law, Sin is dead, Rom. vii. 8. Therefore God winked at those times of Ignorance, when the Means of coming at true Knowledge was not afforded them; which could not have been, if Reason were a sufficient Director, or intended by God to discover at all times a full, perfect, and adequate Rule of Duty. And that it could not do so, is evident from their not knowing how to apply the very common Notions they had, to the several Actions of Life, so as to make them a Rule to walk by. Such was *Arrian's Complaint*, Τὸ ἐστὶ τὸ ἄτιον Epiet.  
 τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντων τῶν κακῶν τὸ τὰς προλήψεις l. 3. c. 26.  
 τὰς κοινὰς μὴ δύνασθαι ἐφαρμόζεν ταῖς ἐπὶ μέρους;  
*That the Cause of all Evil to Man, was the not knowing how to apply common Notions to particular Cases*; which for ever subjected them to Doubt and Error, and rendred the many excellent Precepts among them of little Service or Use to the Conduct of their moral Actions.

And that the many great things spoken by them of Reason and Nature, was owing to an Inability of deducing things from their first and true Principles, may, I think, fairly be collected from the deep Sense they had thro' all the Ages of Philosophy, of the Weakness and Irregularity of Nature, the Dimness and Insufficiency of Reason, the Remoteness and Obscurity of Truth, the Defectiveness of natural Conscience, the extreme Difficulty of knowing what was Virtuous, or doing what was Good; and therefore stood in need of some better Guide and Instructor. It was Euseb.  
 an Aphorism of *Solon*, "That the Mind of the Præp. l.  
 Gods is entirely hid from Men; of others, that l. 3. c. 13.  
 "Truth lies concealed as it were in a deep Pit." p. 688.  
*Plato* frequently laments the Painfulness and Trouble

to perform any morally good or virtuous Action :  
 “ That to explain Wisdom is not indeed very difficult,  
 “ but to reduce it to Use and Practice, is most dif-  
 “ ficult.” And that according to the old Proverb,  
*Good Things are very difficult, χαλεπὰ καλὰ.* Cicero  
 often expreffes himself to this Purpose, *Si tales nos*  
*natura genuiffet, &c.* If we had come into the  
 World in fuch Circumftances, as that we could  
 clearly and diftinctly have difcerned Nature herfelf,  
 and have been able in the Courfe of our Lives to  
 follow her true and uncorrupted Directions; this  
 alone might have been fufficient, and there would  
 have been little need of Teaching and Inftitution:  
 But now Nature has given us only fome fmall  
 Sparks of Right Reason, which we fo quickly ex-  
 tinguifh with corrupt Opinions and evil Practices,  
 that the true Light of Nature no where appears: As  
 foon as we are brought into the World, immedi-  
 ately we dwell in the midft of all Wickednefs, and  
 are furrounded with a number of moft perverfe and  
 foolifh Opinions; fo that we feem to fuck in Er-  
 ror with our Nurfes Milk: Afterwards when we  
 return to our Parents, and are committed to Tutors,  
 then we are further ftocked with fuch Variety of  
 Errors, that Truth becomes perfectly overwhelmed  
 with Falshood; and the moft natural Sentiments of  
 our Minds are entirely ftifled with confirmed Fol-  
 lies: But when, after all this, we enter upon Bu-  
 finefs in the World, and make the Multitude, con-  
 fpiring every where in Wickednefs, our great Guide  
 and Example; then our very Nature itfelf is whol-  
 ly transformed, as it were, into corrupt Opinions.  
*Lucretius* expreffes this very juftly :

*O miferas hominum mentes, O peñora cæca,*  
*Qualibus in tenebris vitæ, quantisque periculis*  
*Degitur hoc ævi, quodcunque eft ———*

So that if Reason be sufficient to all the great Purposes which relate to God, Religion, and eternal Happiness, it slumbered and slept during the long State of Paganism; during which it was always wandering, never found the Paths of Truth and Duty; was drawn away into endless Fooleries instead of Religion, and paid their Adorations to every Being in Heaven and Earth, except the true God. *Iamblichus*, though a Heathen, saw this, and acknowledged there was but one Remedy for all its Errors, Doubts, and Disturbances, and that is, to obtain (if possibly it can) some Particles of Divine Light. De Myst. §. 3. c. 13.

What is the Sum of this, in the Confession of the very Heathens, but that the World was in a State of utter Darkness and Perplexity? they were not able to determine for themselves, nor knew where to find an Instructor that they could with Safety rely upon.

But though the several Articles hitherto advanced be ever so consonant to Universal History and Experience; yet strong Prejudices are conceived against this Hypothesis in general, as derogating from the Dignity of human Nature and Reason. Were this indeed true, it ought to be scorned and rejected; but whilst we contend to give Man his Due, let us be careful to give God his Due also. It is undeniable that there are certain Limits given to every created Power, an appointed Sphere for its Activity and Bounds which it cannot pass: And from these we must regulate and form our Judgments concerning them. If then Reason be not the Measure of Truth; if infinite Productions and Counsels of the eternal Mind escape it; if it cannot, with the ordinary Use of its Faculties, discover the whole System of spiritual Truths and Things; if it cannot universally, clearly, and perfectly distinguish Good and Evil in all the various Instances of Duty  
and

and Sin ; if it cannot form a Rule of Life to direct Man to the Ends of his Being, and point out the several Motives to oblige and influence his Practice ; its Dignity cannot be diminished by receiving Instruction from the Fountain of all Knowledge : So far from being injurious, that it is the highest Advancement of Reason, to enrich and improve it with new Discoveries of the most important Truths, to open fresh Scenes of Wonder for its Contemplation, and shew an unerring way to its final Happiness. For as natural Light cannot contain all that may be known of God or his Will ; and where that ends, Faith begins ; Revelation therefore seems, highly becoming the Divine Goodness, and most consonant to the rational Faculties and the true Interest of Man.

Whenever Man attains the Knowledge of supernatural Objects and Truths, it is always by Instruction ; Reason is never the Discoverer, but only the Faculty that perceives the Certainty and Meaning of them. When an Idea is consentaneous to the Object, it is true ; yet the Mind which receives it, is neither the Idea nor Object, but the Discerner of the Agreement between them. When we deduce Propositions from evident Principles, Reason is neither the Principle nor Conclusion, but the discursive Operation of the Intellect, which by viewing the Connexion and necessary Dependence they have on each other, perceives the Certainty of the Inference : So that when divine Truths are propounded, the Office of Reason is to satisfy the Understanding that they are Good, and from God, therefore perfective of our Natures, and most fit to be believed and obeyed ; yet is neither the Propounder, nor Obeyer of them ; the first is from the Will of God, the other a Determination of the Will of Man.

So that Reason, though not Omnipotent, is to the most excellent Purposes, *i. e.* to all the Ends whereby Man is constituted what he is, a rational Creature. To examine the Truth of Things, separate it from Falshood, and pass Judgment upon them, whether they be reasonable or not, and give degrees of Assent according to the apparent Evidence or Probability that attends them: To know Truth, and to obey it is the whole of Man; the one is the Act of the Understanding, the other of the Will. The End of Reason is, to direct us in the Search of it, so that when found, we may know it and enjoy it.

In human Sciences, the Mind either descends from well-known Principles, to trace and search out necessarily dependent or collateral Truths: Or it ascends from given Effects to investigate the Origin or Cause of them. In both, the Business of Reason is to find out proper intermediate Ideas, and range them in such Order as to perceive their Coherence, that the Conclusion may be right; and know what Assent is to be given to the Proposition sought for. The Conclusion of an Argument which the *Greeks* called ἀπόδειξις, *Cicero* defined to be “ The Acad. Qu. l. 4. n. 8. Reason which leads us from things apprehended and understood, to those things which were not apprehended:” This Inference, or deducing of one Truth from another, is justly esteemed the highest Act of the rational Faculty, and is no more than judging of the Agreement between them. For tho’ it be forced to use many intermediate Truths, to unite Extremes together when they lie remote, yet when these exactly agree with the precedent and subsequent ones, as Links in a Chain, they shew the Connexion between the Extremes however distant, and the Mind by viewing this, perceives the Certainty of the Illation, that the Procedure is regular, and the Conclusion manifestly true. For where

the Connexion is evident, so will the Inference be ; where that is fallacious, obscure, or incoherent ; this will be weak, doubtful, and inconclusive. And from such View the Mind discovers what kind of Assent it ought to give : Where there can be no Exception to the Evidence, the Result is Knowledge ; where the Agreement is not clear, and yet the Testimonies of one side outweigh the other, it is Probability ; where there is an apparent Disagreement, it is Falshood.

This is the great Use of that Faculty which God has given us for our Direction and Advancement in Knowledge, because without this the Mind could never distinguish between Certainty, Probability, or Error. And rational Knowledge is what a Man comes at by such Procedure, not by Chance or Accident ; he receives or believes nothing for Truth, but as Reason directs him, *i. e.* he believes as a rational Creature. And all who judge and act upon such Grounds, who believe or do nothing but what they are convinced by the Use of their Faculties according to the best of their Power, they ought to do, may be justly said to live according to Reason, and do their Duty as rational Creatures.

On the same account, Reason can never be excluded from, but must go hand in hand with Religion, which is λογική λατρεία, *a reasonable Service*, such a Worship as a rational Man on considering it, must conclude to be the most fitting for him to offer, and the Supreme Being to accept. For God never commands, but he convinces also ; we cannot obey without believing, nor believe we know not what, nor know but by discerning the Nature and Obligation of the Duty ; and Obedience being the Act of Understanding and Free-will, is what alone entitles it to Reward. In this God deals with us as Men, not to compel irresistibly,

Rom. xii.  
1.

bly, but to give sufficient Evidence for the Truth and Necessity of whatever he requires, *i. e.* all that the Nature of the thing to be proved is capable of, and it cannot be reasonable for Men to expect more; after which he leaves them to themselves, to their own free Determination; that if they choose Obedience, they may be entitled to Reward; if Disobedience, be subject to Punishment.

If Men therefore are not careless to neglect, or blinded by Prejudices not to see the Evidence which is offered, but will impartially use their Faculties of Examining, Reasoning, and Judging, they cannot fail being persuaded by many certain Proofs of the Truths in Religion, and clearly perceive that there is the highest Reason in the World to believe and obey them. For if Men will not be convinced by the Evidence they have, which is the most credible and rational that can be offered, neither would they by any other: And their Disbelief is apparently owing, not to want of Proof, but to a careless Inattention, or some wicked unruly Passions, which have a greater Interest in their Hearts, than Reason has in their Minds, and hurries them away to act so directly contrary to all Evidence and Truth.

The great Difference between the Objects of human Knowledge and divine, is, that in the former there is a spacious Field for new Acquisitions and Improvements: Experience, Observation, and Industry make fresh Discoveries in the Arts, Sciences, and Natural Philosophy: Penetration into one Effect or Cause helps to explain another: The Progress of one Age in real Learning is of great Benefit to succeeding Ages: And whilst the Mind busies it self in Enquiries after useful Wisdom, it will by Reflexion, Demonstration, Experiments, and Historical Observations add to its former Store; and by having larger Views, more Objects and Ideas,

and consequently more Truths to speculate and reason upon, greatly extends its Comprehension and Knowledge.

But in divine invisible Objects, it is far otherwise; the Boundary is fixed, our Inquiries limited to what is revealed, and all further Search vain and unlawful. These things are above the Discovery of Reason, it had no Principles from which it could regularly deduce them, by any natural Use of its Faculties; and without supernatural Instruction could never have attained the least Knowledge or Probability concerning them. It was not possible for any Idea, Notion, or Apprehension of them to enter the Mind, but by the Mediation of some external Agency: So that all we do, or can hope to know of them in this World, is from Revelation. Reason indeed, or the Workings of an inquisitive sagacious Mind, may improve itself, but not the Subject: It may discover variety of Arguments to explain the Beauties, and shew the Necessity of supernatural Truths, but it cannot add one to the original Stock; nor speak a Word of their Essence or Nature beyond what Revelation teaches. So that Revelation (in Mr. *Locke's* Words) is nothing but Reason enlarged by a new set of Discoveries, not laid within the reach of its natural Faculties, but communicated by God immediately, which Reason vouches the Truth of, by the Testimony and Proof it gives, that they come from God.

And here we must observe, that as divine Truths are such, which mere Reason could not discover, (for the Natural Man, or Natural Reason perceives them not, but they are spiritually discerned by the same Faculty indeed, but not till assisted and taught by God) therefore God made such Manifestations as were necessary to the End of our Being, in a manner suitable to our Capacities, and a Degree fitting our Condition. Whence it will follow,



low, *First*, That though a Proposition revealed by God, cannot be made out by natural Principles, so as to frame any distinct or clear Reasonings concerning it, it ought not on that Account to be rejected: Because if our natural Faculties by their usual Procedure could have come at them, there had been no need of Revelation: Or how there can be a Revelation (if there be any Propriety in the Term) to one, of what he certainly knows already, is very hard to be conceived, and at best is a very unwarrantable Explanation of a divine Interposition; and if Revelation was necessary, then the Degree of it must depend upon the Divine Will and Pleasure; and we need not know more than he thinks sufficient for us. Nor, *Secondly*, on the other hand, Because the Necessity of a Revealed Truth may seem capable of being proved by Reason, that therefore we should conclude it was originally a natural Dictate of it; for all divine Emanations are highly agreeable to the most perfect Reason: But if the Object had not been manifested, the Mind had never seen it, or looked out for Proofs to establish the Clearness and Validity of it. And the only Consequence of this, is, that Truths not discoverable by natural Light, when made known by Revelation, are apparently most agreeable to sound unprejudiced Reason: That in these Cases though Reason be the Eye or Faculty that sees, yet in things pertaining to God, Revelation only is the Light whereby it is enabled to do it; for Natural Reason, if not taught by God, would have for ever remained ignorant of them.

Whenever supernatural Objects are propounded to the Mind for its Contemplation, Knowledge, or Assent, it has no other Office (yet this is a most important one) but to inquire, whether they be of divine Original or not: And it has two sure Rules for its Direction herein. *First*, The Intrinsic Good-

ness and Excellency of the Revelation ; And, *Secondly*, all the external Proofs, the Nature of the Subject will admit, of its being immediately and directly from God. From whence the Conclusion will naturally follow ; that whatever has these Testimonies, ought to be received as a Rule of Faith and Action ; because there cannot be a plainer Dictate of Reason than this, that whatever is from God must be certainly true, and whatever he commands ought to be observed and obeyed.

And in this God deals with us as with rational Creatures, requires nothing that does not carry such Conviction with it, that we must acknowledge to be most reasonable, and therefore what by our own Principles ought to determine our Judgment, and regulate our Practice. God himself appeals to this Decision, and submits the Equity of his Commands and Proceedings to this very Rule ; *Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more, that I have not done—Hear now,—is not my way equal, are not your ways unequal ?* The Justice of his Dealings is so evident, that he willingly refers the Determination of it our own Reason.

If. v. 3.

Ezek.

xviii. 25.

The only just Light then that we can take a view of Nature and Antiquity in, is such an one as shews Natural Reason to be clear enough to perceive the Truth and the Necessity of its Deductions, when proposed and shewn ; but not strong enough to discover it, or draw right Deductions from it.

The Evidence of this appears from comparing the Ages of Philosophy and Christianity ; for why were Divine Truths so clearly known, so readily embraced, and so universally obeyed in one and not in the other ; yet Reason was as strong in the Philosopher as the Christian ? The only Answer it can receive is obvious, Natural Reason could not discern them, because it had not been instructed in them. But it was no sooner taught by Revelation,  
but

but it saw and acknowledged the Truth and Beauty of them.

And this View of Antiquity (says a learned Modern) is true with regard to Natural Religion in general: Where we find Human Reason could penetrate very far into the essential Difference of things; but wanting the true Principles of Religion, the Ancients neither knew the true Origin of Obligation, nor the Consequence of Obedience. Revelation has discovered these Principles, and we now wonder that such Prodigies of Parts and Knowledge could commit the gross Absurdities that are to be found in their best Treatises of Morality. Which yet does not hinder us from falling into a greater and worse Delusion. For seeing of late several excellent Systems of Morals under the Title of *The Principles of Natural Religion*, that disclaim the Aid of Revelation, we are apt to think them indeed the Discoveries of Natural Religion, and so regard their Excellencies as an Objection to the Necessity of any farther Light. The Pretence is plausible; but surely there must be some Mistake at the bottom; and the immense Difference in point of Perfection between these imaginary Productions of Reason, and those real ones of the most learned Antients, will increase our Suspicion. The Truth is, these modern System-Writers had an Aid, which as they do not acknowledge, so I persuade myself they did not perceive. This Aid were the true Principles of Religion, delivered by Revelation; Principles so clear and evident, that they are now mistaken to be amongst the first and simplest Ideas. But those who understand Antiquity, know the Matter to be far otherwise.

Mr. *Locke* was not prejudiced in this Cause, yet says, “ How short their several Systems (*viz.* of Reasonab. of Christ. true and complete Morality, is very visible. And P. 266. if, since that the Christian Philosophers have much

“ outdone them, yet we may observe, the first Know-  
 “ ledge of the Truths they have added, are owing  
 “ to Revelation ; tho’ as soon as they are heard and  
 “ considered, they are found to be agreeable to  
 “ Reason, and such as can by no means be contradic-  
 “ ted. Every one may observe a great many Truths  
 “ which he receives at first from others, and read-  
 “ ily assents to as consonant to Reason, which he  
 “ would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond  
 “ his Strength to have discovered himself. Native  
 “ and original Truth is not so easily wrought out of  
 “ the Mine, as we who have it delivered, ready dug  
 “ and fashioned, into our hands, are apt to imagine.  
 Id. p. 267 “ Whatever was the Cause, ’tis plain in fact, Hu-  
 “ man Reason unassisted, failed Men in its great  
 “ and proper Business of Morality : It never from  
 “ unquestionable Principles, by their Deductions,  
 “ made out an entire Body of the *Law of Nature*.”  
 P. 278. And afterwards, “ Many are beholden to Revela-  
 “ tion, who do not acknowledge it.”

This is the plain undeniable Fact, and cannot be  
 accounted for on any other Principles ; and there-  
 fore what Infidelity advances, that Reason is Master  
 of all the Truths which Revelation has discovered,  
 is absolutely false, and a Contradiction to all that is  
 known of Antiquity ; and they who have unwarily  
 made Concessions of the like Nature, have seen the  
 Atheist retort upon them, and shew from their own  
 Principles, that if Reason can do every thing, Chri-  
 stianity cannot be necessary. They who deny any Use  
 of Reason to satisfy the Mind in Matters of reveal-  
 ed Truths, destroy the Means that God has afforded  
 to convince us of the Reasonableness and Obligation  
 of Duty ; and by unjustifiable Pretences to the Spi-  
 rit have advanced the most extravagant Fancies an  
 over-heated Brain could suggest ; and instead of a  
 Rational Worship have fallen into all the Delusions  
 of Madness and Enthusiasm,

The middle Way therefore between the two Extremes admits of no Objection : That there is a Use of Reason without Prejudice to Religion. God proposes something to the Understanding, which by Natural Reason it could not have found out ; the Rational Faculty perceives the Truth and Agreeableness thereof, with the Certainty of its being from God, therefore yields up its Assent, and believes upon good Reasons ; for he cannot be said to believe who has no Reason for so doing, because a Rational Mind cannot determine its Assent but upon rational Grounds and Evidence. The Understanding however cannot exercise its Faculties about any of the Truths of God, till it is instructed, and has the proper Notices communicated to it ; but these are not discoverable *à priori*, from any Light of Nature, but all taken from the divine Act of Revelation : Yet in this God no way ceases to deal with us as Men ; he only presents fresh Objects, and gives new Notices of things, thereby indeed extending and enlarging our Prospect, but does not alter the Faculties we had before. Our Reason has still the same Use, only a wider Compass to employ and exert itself in, with different Lights and Assistances to judge and determine by.

This surely is not to degrade, but to exalt Reason, and that to the noblest and most excellent Purposes. To adore the divine Wisdom and Goodness ; to satisfy ourselves in the most important Point, that the Religion we profess is from God ; to distinguish Truth from Falshood, and reject all Impostures or Pretences to Revelation, either from the Impiety or Contradiction of the Doctrine, or from Insufficiency of Proof that it is from God.

Hence we are sure, that whatever implies a Contradiction, or is repugnant to any of the Divine Attributes, cannot be a Revelation from God ; and if an Angel from Heaven should teach such Doctrines,

we

we must reject them. Because what is inconsistent with certain Truth, must certainly be false : And if Reason, where it is clearest, be false, we can have no Assurance it is ever true, and consequently have no Certainty either in Science or Faith. Nor can two Truths be contrary to each other, because nothing can be true and false at the same time. So Impossibilities cannot be matter of Faith, because they are no Acts of Power, no Effects of Omnipotence ; and what is not to be produced, is not to be believed. Nor can we believe Incredibilities, for that would be to believe and disbelieve the same thing ; or for Reason to assent to an unreasonable thing, which are Contradictions.

But I need not insist on this : as Infidelity has not been able to shew that Religion recommends any thing impious, absurd, impossible, or contradictory ; any thing that is not perfective of our Beings, suitable to our Inclinations, and tending to our final Good ; all which are most consistent with Truth, and reconcilable to Reason, what it cannot but approve, so as to believe what is true, and embrace what will render it happy : On this account Religion must be a rational Service, as proposing nothing to be done but what is most agreeable to the Desires and Expectations of Nature : Nothing to be believed, but what an honest inform'd Mind, by the common Ways of Knowledge, may satisfy itself of its Truth, and coming from God. Our Intellectual Faculty therefore is never so well employ'd, as in satisfying itself and others, that the Truths of God are most exactly conformable to its own Principles, that the Good of his Creatures seems to be the Rule and Reason of all he enjoins ; and therefore deserve from us the fullest Credit, the strongest Love, and the most prevailing Influence.

The great Hinge on which all Religion turns, is, That there is a God, and that he will reward and

punish. God therefore manifested himself and his Attributes, and added two especial Proofs thereof for our Conviction ; necessary Existence, and the Works of Creation : Both which are so obvious when proposed to our natural Faculties, that the World has mistaken them for self-evident innate Principles ; as also the necessary Consequences from them : That necessary Existence is eternal ; That Omnipotence can do every thing which does not imply a Contradiction ; That Infinite Truth can neither deceive nor be deceived ; That unerring Righteousness can will nothing but what is just and good ; That the Supreme must have absolute Authority over all Beings dependent upon it, &c.

The Second Proposition is clearly deducible from the other, by the strictest Principles of Reason : That God is just in all his Dealings : That Justice will punish Guilt ; That Guilt is offending where there is a Power of doing otherwise ; That Man might have done otherwise, because he is a free Agent ; That he is a free Agent, as having with him a Power of Self-determination.

So that if we search this Matter to the Bottom, we shall find that the Reason of Faith is the Foundation of all Religion ; both the Articles of this Universal Creed, that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that seek him, being manifested from Revelation only. For Man, as rational, must propose and desire some End : The End of all Beings is the Perfection of their Nature ; the Perfection of any Nature is enjoying all the Happiness it is capable of. So again, to desire the End, is to desire the Means also : The Means to attain Happiness, is to procure his Favour, on whom the bestowing of it solely depends. To procure his Favour, is the doing what he commands. His Commands are his Will ; and his Will he has revealed to us in the Scriptures. So that the revealed Will of God is the

the only Rule and Law of Action. Because he enjoins it, the Obligation is perpetual; and Obedience being the only Means of Happiness, the Reasons for it are immutable. Therefore absolute Compliance with the divine revealed Will, is the whole of Religion, or the End of Man; and on that account most fit and reasonable for him to be faithful and diligent in the Practice of it. To which may be added, that as God has several Ways revealed himself, yet the Excellencies of the Gospel-Revelation are apparently above all others.

But further: If we would consider the Agreement of Reason with Faith, in the strictest Acceptation of the Word: As whatever we come at the Knowledge of by the Use of our Faculties, is properly Matter of Reason; so what is above their Discovery, is above Reason, and consequently when revealed to us, are Matters of Faith. Certainly there can be nothing unreasonable in this Procedure; because tho' God has given us Reason, he has neither debarred himself of, nor is it contrary to any known Attributes to afford us the Light of Revelation; for there is always room for Infinite Wisdom to make fresh Discoveries to his Creatures, as Infinite Power can always give sufficient Testimony of their being from God. To deprive him of these, is to deny his very Being; and to find fault with what tends to our Perfection, must be very ungrateful and unreasonable. Again, whatever God reveals is certainly true, therefore no doubt can be made of it; it must overrule all Opinions, Prejudices, and Interests; it has a just Right to be received with a full Assent, *i. e.* Faith. And such a Submission as this of Reason to Faith (even in Mr. *Locke's* Opinion) takes not away the Land-marks of Knowledge, shakes not the Foundations of Reason, but leaves us that Use of our Faculties for which they were given us; and consequently nothing in Faith can be contrary to Reason.

Human  
Underft.  
l. 4. c. 18.  
§. 10. p.  
421.



Reason. The same learned Writer thus sums it up. "There is nothing more required of a Christian, but that he receive all the Parts of Divine Revelation with a Docility and Disposition prepared to embrace and assent to all Truths coming from God; and submit his Mind to whatsoever shall appear to him to bear that Character."

Reasonab.  
of Chritt.  
p. 300.

The Things supposed to be the Objects of this Knowledge, or above Reason, in the Opinion of the Ancients, were included under that Part of Theology, termed *Metaphysical*, above or beyond Nature. In this Class, *Plato* ranges the Contemplation of all Divine things; such as, the First Being or Cause, the Origin of Things, the Wonders of Providence, the Worship of God, the Mysteries of Religion, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State. He never pretended one of these to be discoverable by Reason, but always ingenuously confesses them to be learned by Traditions brought from the Barbarians, *viz.* the *Jews*, &c. They were frequently termed τὰ θαυμαστά, *wonderful things*; as being neither discoverable nor demonstrable by Reason. On which very account *Aristotle* esteemed them ἀχρηστά, *useless things*, because beyond the Sphere of his, and all natural Reason and Understanding; and styled those Philosophers, who dwelt much in the Contemplation of such Subjects, φιλομύθους, *Lovers of Fable or Tradition*.

Now Faith is nothing but a firm Assent of the Mind (which is an Act of Reason) to some Proposition or Truth, upon the Credit and infallible Testimony of the Proposer, which is God. To believe on the Testimony of God, is Faith: To know it is divine Testimony, is a Matter of Reason, in perceiving it has all the clear Evidences the Nature of the thing will admit of to conclude its Assent. For as on the one hand, Reason cannot assent to what it does not know or believe; so on the other,

Ethic. 1.  
1. c. 7.

other, it is highly unreasonable not to believe a Thing that has all the Marks of Certainty it possibly can have, for its Credibility. This is *Aristotle's* own Rule; "Not to expect in all things the same Exactness, but in every thing to content ourselves with such a Method as the subject Matter will bear." Mathematicks require a different Demonstration from Morals, and Morals from Physicks; yet each of these Kinds of Evidence satisfies the Mind, so as to leave no room of their unquestionable Truth: For we can know Things only as they are to be known, which must be according to the Nature of Things; and to expect a Proof which Nature is incapable of, can neither be reasonable, nor just.

But the Question in Matters purely of Faith, is not, whether what God says be true (for that is already supposed) but whether he hath spoken it or not. To satisfy us in this, we can only enquire of unprejudiced Reason, what are the utmost Proofs the Subject will bear, which must be as convincing as any other Kind of Demonstration; because where Reason has all it can require, it will, and must be satisfied. Now some things are capable of direct Arguments, others only of indirect ones; in either Case, if we have the proper and natural Proofs, it is sufficient; we follow our Reason, it being reasonable to believe any thing, which is as true, as in the Nature of Things it possibly can be.

Vid. Bp.  
London  
Past. Lett.  
1. P. 13.

As to Matters of Revelation therefore, we cannot require more than the Testimony of competent and undoubted Witnesses, Prophecy, Miracles, History, Universal Tradition, the Acknowledgment of all Ages, the Nature of Things delivered, and unprejudiced Reason assisting the Mind in these Disquisitions; because these are the highest Attestations that can be brought for the Support of such Truths. Where then these Testimonies concur

cur and are unexceptionable, to deny Assent would be unreasonable, because it is all the Nature of the Thing will admit, and on that Account, a proper Object for the Understanding. To demand more is contrary to Nature, therefore contrary to Reason, because what it knows to be false, it cannot believe. And as God never requires Faith as a Duty, but he gives sufficient Arguments to induce it, Infidelity must be inexcusable. He that will not enquire into these Motives, takes his Belief upon trust, and has no Reason for what he does: He that upon enquiry finds them as competent as the Nature of Things will admit, yet believes not, is irrational as the other, having no Reason for refusing so to do. And they who are resolved not to believe a sufficient Evidence, neither *would they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead.* Thus Reason has its proper and due Authority, though in Subjects of pure Divine Revelation, the Authority of God will always be found the highest Reason, therefore have they the strongest Demand to our Belief. And he who denies these to be proper Evidences of a Revelation, must at the same time deny that it is possible for God to make any Revelation, that can be rationally believed.

Nor is all this saying any more, than that God made us Rational Creatures, and deals with us as such, *i. e.* what we are; and to do otherwise would cast an Imputation on his Justice or Wisdom. Nor can Faith and Reason be opposite, though several Things; but only different Notices and Methods of coming at Knowledge, and proving Truths by such Principles as they are capable of, and is most reasonable to do. So that Faith is no more than the highest instructed Reason, no Principle in one contradicts the other. Revelation discovers some glorious Truths, and Reason bears witness that they

they are credible, from God, and ought to be believed and obeyed. And therefore the most exalted Doctrines of Revelation offer no Injury or Violence to Reason, but are Aids and Enlargements to it in this dark imperfect State: And therefore may demand the most serious Attention of every Rational Creature.

It is therefore a vain and false Insinuation of Infidelity, that we must give up our Reason, if we would embrace Revelation: For we only believe, because it is most reasonable so to do. When upon an impartial Examination, Reason finds the Evidences to be full and sufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be received, and as a necessary Consequence thereof, directs us to give up ourselves to the Guidance of it. But here Reason stops; not as set aside by Revelation, but as taking Revelation for its Guide, and not thinking itself at Liberty to call in question the Wisdom and Experience of any Part, after it is satisfied that the whole comes from God.

Bp. Lond.  
2d. Part.  
Lett. p. 4.

Neither is it any Objection to the Reasonableness of Revelation, that we are not able to comprehend the whole of those Subjects it exhibits to us. To manifest them in any Degree is matter of Divine Pleasure, and God cannot be under the least Necessity to unfold all the Reasons that belong to them. There are *secret Things which belong unto the Lord our God, and things that are revealed.* To attempt knowing what is secret and withheld from us, is Arrogance: Our Knowledge is confined to revealed Things, and only so far as they are revealed. That is the prescribed Bounds, beyond which no created Understanding can pass. For where God is silent, neither Heaven nor Earth can give us further Light.

Deut.  
xxix.  
29.

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When therefore Revelation affirms a Thing vastly beyond our Comprehension, but no way contrary to our Reason, we have nothing to do but submit, to believe, though our Reason cannot tell us why or how such things are; because we cannot measure the Wisdom or the Works of God; it therefore may be true, though we are ignorant of it; nay, it infallibly must be so, because God has said it, and no Reason can make us doubt of his Veracity. And there is an Evidence of eternal Truth, which the Mind of Man, with its most refined Speculations could neither discover nor comprehend, and therefore must have some other Foundation, which can be none else, but those Discoveries which infinite Wisdom makes of itself: And consequently the noblest Mark of true and solid Reason is, to be determined by that Authority which is unerring, and has a Right to demand an implicit Subjection. “For the  
“ holy Scripture (says Mr. *Locke*, in the last Year  
“ of his Life) has God for its Author, Salvation  
“ for its End, and Truth without any mixture of  
“ Error for its Matter.”

Posthum.  
Works.  
p. 344.

“ Therefore (says the same Author) I gratefully  
“ receive, and rejoice in the Light of Revelation,  
“ which sets me at rest in many things, the Manner  
“ whereof my poor Reason can by no means make  
“ out to me.”

But to reject or disbelieve Things, because we understand not the whole of their Nature, Modes of Existence or Fitness, is not Reason but Stupidity. It is either to make our Minds the Rule of Truth, or to affirm that, because God has not given us all the Reasons of Things, it is not possible there should be any; both which are equally irrational. For it is of the Nature of these Things to be above Reason, *i. e.* what of itself it could not have discovered: But it is not above Reason, when instructed, to discern the Truth and Certainty of them, so far as

is revealed. To do this, is sufficient; to do more, is impossible; this is the only Measure and Rule of Faith.

“ To reject a Revelation (says an excellent Pre-  
 late) because we cannot clearly see the Fitness  
 and Expedience of every Part, is to make our-  
 selves as knowing as God; whose Wisdom is in-  
 finite, and the Depth of whose Dispensations,  
 with the Reasons and Ends of them, are  
 not to be fathomed by our short and narrow  
 Comprehensions: It is the greatest Folly as well as  
 Presumption to conclude that this or that Reve-  
 lation cannot come from God, because we can-  
 not see in every Respect the Fitness and Reason-  
 ableness of it. The true Inference is, that the  
 Revelation is therefore wise, good, and just,  
 and fit to be received, and submitted to by us,  
 because we have sufficient Reason to believe that  
 it came from God. For so far he has made us  
 competent Judges, in as much as Natural Reason  
 informs us what are the proper Evidences of a  
 Divine Revelation. But for us to attempt to  
 make a Judgment of the Fitness of the Means  
 to attain the End, is to put ourselves in the  
 Place of God, and to forget that we are frail  
 Men; that is, short-sighted and ignorant Crea-  
 tures, who know very little of Divine Matters,  
 farther than that it has pleased God to reveal  
 them to us.”

Bp. Lond.  
 1st Past.  
 Let. p. 13.

The Resurrection of the Body is what no Force of human Wisdom could have discovered: Yet Reason tells us it is possible, and within the Power of God to effect it; therefore the Understanding may fully assent to it, without knowing the Bounds of Omnipotence, or in what manner he will accomplish, and bring it to pass. The Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity surpasses the Comprehension of Men and Angels, yet is no way contrary to Reason,  
 nor

nor ever the less true, because we are short-sighted ignorant Creatures : For God is Infinite, but we are finite, and therefore cannot apprehend or contain the vast Immensity of his Counsels or Nature. And this Conclusion we may safely draw ; That since all we see or know appears so wonderful and true, it is reasonable to believe what yet lies under the Veil, is either unfit for us to know, or too big for our Understanding, and reserved for our Adorations in a State of Glory. We should therefore regulate our Thirst of Knowledge here, by the Advice of the wise Hebrew ; *Search not the things that are above thy Strength, but what is commanded thee, think thereon with Reverence.* Ecclus iii. 21.

The Sum is : God created Man rational with Faculties to receive and apprehend Truth, which way soever communicated : Matters of pure Revelation are immediately from the Instruction of God, therefore most reasonable to be believed, because most certainly true ; but cannot be believed otherwise than he has proposed them, either in manner or degree. From the Insufficiency of Reason to guide us in all Matters relating to our final Good, appears the Necessity of Revelation, against the Cavils of those who would so exalt Nature as to render it altogether needless. And the Evidence of its coming from God, manifests the Obligation we are under to receive and obey it, against the Atheistical Objections of those, who would represent it as a superstitious Contrivance or Invention of Men.

When therefore Reason refuses to submit to this Guidance, or assent to what has all the inward and external Marks of Truth and infallible Testimony ; when it will deny, only because it cannot comprehend and fathom the Depths of God with its own short Line ; or attempts to give Reasons, and account for things which God has not thought fitting to explain ; then it transgresses the Bound of

Duty, and instead of a Guide becomes a Deceiver and Destroyer of those who follow its Directions. Confidence is always dangerous; it has been ever found that the best natural Sense is not sufficient in human Affairs without Experience; nor in divine ones, without Revelation.

It is this Arrogance, Self-sufficiency, and exalting Reason to an Independency upon God, that has been the Source of all fatal Error and Impiety, and tempted Men to revolt from Religion and from God. Such Oracles of vain Reason have all the Doubters and Disputers against Religion been since the World began. The more Men have depended upon Reason for the measure of divine Things, the further always have they erred from the Truth. And what this is owing to, we may learn from the Confession of a noble Author, in the first Class among the Despisers of Revelation.

Characte-  
rist. vol. 1.

“ There is (says he) a certain perverse Humanity in us, which inwardly resists the divine Commis-  
sion, though ever so plainly revealed.” The Words are spoke on a particular Instance, but hold true in him with regard to the whole Revelation: There is no want of Evidence in divine Philosophy; but there is in Man a Pride and over-conceited Opinion of Reason, an Affectation of Superiority in Judgment, a Love of Novelty and Singularity, a Pleasure in opposing generally received and established Truths, together with a petulant inflated libertine Spirit of Unbelief in Man, which, though it discerns the Light, will not acknowledge or admit it.

I shall add only one Caution more, *viz.* That however perfect Reason may be; the Use of it, the Ratiocinations of Men, are vastly imperfect. Do we not every Day see wise Men falling into dangerous Errors and Mistakes? and when their Arguments come to be examined, are found to proceed  
on



on loose uncertain Principles, to use fallacious incoherent Ideas, or draw weak or false Conclusions. If this be not so, whence comes so much Controversy, Opposition, and Litigation in all Parts of Knowledge, among the Learned of the World? So that Care must be taken not to admit every thing for strict Reasoning that pretends to be so; but rather to suspect what is subject to so much Abuse, especially when we find it striving against God. For such are the Prejudices of some Minds through the Workings of Satan, the strong Power of Delusion, or the Deceit of Unrighteousness, that they will not believe the Truth, but instead thereof a Lye, and have Pleasure in Unrighteousness, because they received not the Love of the Truth.

But I willingly omit many Topicks on this Subject, there being such Variety of excellent Treatises in the World, that firmly demonstrate the exact Agreement of Christianity with all the Principles of Reason; its Evidences to be so plain and direct to the common Apprehensions of Men, that the more an impartial Mind inquires into its Grounds and Doctrines, the clearer and fuller Satisfaction will he receive; the Certainty of its Revelations, and how fitly we may believe and adore those incomprehensible Mysteries, which we cannot fully understand, and reverence the Exhibition of those glorious Truths, which the blessed *Angels desire to look into.*

I pass on to consider the Arguments which are offered in support of Natural Religion: Or that Man by a due Use of his Faculties, without the Aid of Revelation, may attain a sufficient Knowledge of whatever is necessary to direct him to the final End of his Being. The principal of which I think are these following,

*First,* The Testimony of Scripture.

*Secondly,* The Contemplation of the Works of God.

*Thirdly,* The eternal Reason and Fitness of Things.



## C H A P. IV.

*Texts of Scripture relating to the Natural Law. Of Natural Religion being learned from the Works of Creation. The Knowledge of God not to be had from the Contemplation of our own Frame. The Deity not discoverable from the Fitness of Things.*

**T**HE first Argument, and of the greatest weight to prove Divine Things (those to which this Inquiry is limited) may be discovered by the Light of Nature, is founded on some Texts of Scripture; from which it is said we may fairly and with certainty conclude, that though Man has no original Impressions of a Deity stamped upon his Mind, yet he is endowed with such Faculties, as by a natural Use of them he cannot fail to discern and know him; for God has not left himself without a Witness, but provided such abundant Means for this purpose, that no one can remain ignorant of him, who carefully attends to them, and especially the Works of Creation. The Magnificence, Order, and Variety of which, the Progression of Causes, the necessary Series, Connexion, and Dependence of Natural Things, must raise the Mind to the Contemplation and Acknowledgment of some first self-originated Cause, the Fountain and Author of every other Being. And from this Principle once established, such Conclusions may be regularly drawn, as will demonstrate the Necessity of those essential Properties and Attributes which are inseparable from his Nature. And that by considering the several Relations we stand in to him of Creation, Preservation, &c. we may

may irrefragably infer the various Duties of Worship and Adoration we owe to him, and the sundry Obligations we are under to our selves, and one another, which make up the Substance of the Moral Law or Religion of Nature.

Were this Supposition true, the Law of Nature would stand in need of no other Testimonies, and I must here stop the Inquiry. For what the Spirit of God declares, must be allowed as full Evidence; there is no room for Doubt, it can receive no higher Demonstration. But I maintain the present Hypothesis from a full Conviction, that it is best consistent with the Attributes of God, the Passages of Providence, and the Faculties of the Mind; to be fully supported from the Authority of Scripture, and most agreeable to the Phænomena of Nature, to Reason, and Experience.

The first Text I shall mention, because constantly appealed to on this Occasion, is that of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, i. 20. But the Apostle is here so far from asserting the Sufficiency of Nature to discover the Existence of a Deity, that his very Argument is founded on the Heathens being already convinced of this Truth; and from thence shews the Unreasonableness and Impiety of their Idolatry: Which was the first Point necessary to convince the Heathens of, in order to bring them to a Knowledge of the true God, and justify the Almighty's Proceedings, *in giving them up to a reprobate Mind, receiving in themselves the recompence of their error which is meet*, ver. 27.

“ For the first Step in Wisdom is to see what is <sup>Lactant.</sup>  
false; and the second, to know the Truth; since <sup>l. 1. p. 109.</sup>  
“ whoever discerns the one, will be disposed to  
“ receive the other.”

Now, it is never denied, that the World once knew the true God, and no other; Him the righteous *Noah* preached to his Sons, and they to their Posterity; but these great Truths were, after the

Cl. Alex.  
Strom. 6.  
p. 646.

Dispersion, soon defaced and obliterated. The Nations, as *David* says, *Psal. ix. 17. forgot God*; For-  
gat him whom they had once known, and his  
true Nature and Essence, as if they had never been  
declared to them. So that there remained only  
ἐθέσις τις ἀμυρεὴ τῆ Θεοῦ, a certain dusky,  
obscure Knowledge of God, the Name of such  
a Being, and a faint Application of some Attri-  
butes, which they also transferred to Creatures in  
a Manner absolutely inconsistent with the Divine  
Nature, which was utterly forgot, and became little  
more than a Name or empty Sound in the World,  
being mixed up with so many Falshoods, and ap-  
plied to such sacrilegious Purposes.

Gods they had innumerable; and therefore the  
Existence of a Deity is here taken for granted, be-  
ing a Truth confessed by both Parties. Had it been  
otherwise, he would have charged them with Athe-  
ism, or denying such Existence, not with Supersti-  
tion or the Worship of many Gods: For the Que-  
stion which divided the World, was not, whether  
there were Gods, but what they were, and how to  
be worshipped. And this was their Folly, that pro-  
fessing themselves wise, admitting the Existence of  
the Gods, and some kind of Worship to be due to  
them, they should nevertheless entertain such false  
Conceptions of both these important Points.

Vid. Orig.  
cont. Cels.  
L. 6. p.  
276.

And the Apostle might here allude to the many  
excellent Things *Socrates* and others had spoken of the  
Divine Nature, of the ineffable First Good, *μυστα-  
μῶς εἶναι ἄριστον τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαθόν*. Yet notwith-  
standing this, they erred so greatly in the Worship  
due to the Being they described, and continued in the  
Belief and Adoration of their Country-Gods, and so  
became Fools: For the wisest of this World, inflat-  
ed with the Notions of a Deity, taken from their  
Poets and Philosophers, hastned with the Ignorant,  
and hurried away others to Temples, and Idols, and  
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the Celebration of execrable Myſteries. Had they known the true God, they would have perceived the Abſurdity of ſuch Practice ; as they did not, they were Fools in his ſight : And what Man in his Senſes would not deride him who diſcourſes of the Gods in a philoſophical exalted manner, yet immediately betakes himſelf to dumb Statues, converſes with, reverences, and prays to them as Gods, or Representations of them, *ὡς θεοῖς, ἢ θεῶν εἰκόσι* ; or by beholding them as a Symbol, pretends to raiſe his Mind to a Conception of an Intellectual Deity. All theſe things are Falſhoods, and herein they changed the Truth of God into a Lye.

For to acknowledge an infinitely Supreme Being, and yet admit more Infinities, or a Crowd of little inferior Gods, *i. e.* no Gods at all, into Partnership with Supremacy, is to common Senſe the greateſt Abſurdity : Or to believe a moſt perfect Being, governing all things with Juſtice and Wiſdom, and on that account the proper Object of Adoration ; yet pay divine Worſhip to an Army of Demons and Idols, is ſuch a Contradiction, that the natural Uſe of their Reaſon ſhould have made them deteſt it as irrational. But the Fact was quite otherwiſe ; the Harveſt of Deities which ſprang up in *Egypt*, was cultivated in *Greece*, and thence borrowed by the *Romans*, was ſo far from being thought unreaſonable by the latter, that, as *Cotta* ſays, inſtead of confuting, they confirmed all the Fables, by endeavouring to give a proper Meaning and Explanation to them. *Vestri autem non modo hæc non refellunt, verum etiam confirmant, interpretando quorſum quidque pertineat.*

And had they retained, beſides the Name, ſome juſt Apprehenſions of a Deity, and his incommunicable Attributes, it had been impoſſible they ſhould have thus denied them, and change his Glory, the inviſible divine Perfections, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, or Beaſt. That the whole ſhould

Orig. Ib.

l. 7. p.

362.

Cic. Nat.

D. l. 3.

n. 23.

Arnob. L.  
6. p. 118,  
119.

should be sunk into such Madness, and Departure from all Understanding, as to prostrate themselves before a despicable senseless Piece of Matter, to believe That a God, which they themselves had formed: To tremble, and fear, and implore Blessings from a Bit of Wood, or Stone or Ivory; and fall down before Idols, made (as the ancient Christians ridicul'd them) out of old unclean Vessels, Pots, Candlesticks, or Close-stools, and imagine such base things, by passing into another Shape, should have Life, and Majesty, and Divinity conferred on them. This was a Reproach to Reason, and the most besotted Darkness we can conceive the Minds of Men to be involved in. *Nevertheless, the times of this darkness God winked at*, Acts xvii. 30. which he would not have done, if every Man by Nature could have attained this Wisdom, the Knowledge of God, and his Duty to him. But now that a clear Manifestation of these things is made by the Gospel, *He commandeth all Men every where to repent, to turn from their Idols, and to serve the living God*; for in the Day of Knowledge there will be no Allowance made for Impenitence or Idolatry.

Ver. 18. *For the Wrath of God against these Sins is now fully declared, not by Nature or Reason, but is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness, especially the Violations of the First Table, giving divine Honour to what by Nature is not God, and Unrighteousness of Men, their impious and immoral Practices, who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, by acting maliciously against those common Notions they had of it. It is also Righteousness and Justice to give every one their Due, but they gave to the Creature what belonged to the Creator only; and so committed a double Sin, not only robbed him of his Honour, but, as it were in reproach to him, transferred it to another.*

Ver. 19.

Ver. 19. *Because that which may be known of God,* as much as was necessary and sufficient for their present Circumstances, concerning his Essence, Attributes, or Will, *is manifest in them,* or (as the Margin and others read it) to them, or among them, not indeed from Nature and Reason, *for God hath shewed it unto them,* ἐφανερώσε, the Word expressly Vid. Orig. denotes a positive Act of God, who brought to light, cont. Cels. made manifest and evident that which was dark, ob- l. 3. p. 140. scure and unknown before, by the sundry Ways he thought proper to reveal and make himself known to us.

Ver. 20. *For* (γάρ, *nam, siquidem,* forasmuch as) *the invisible things of him,* his Eternal Power and Godhead, as afterwards explained, *from,* not ἐκ, but ἀπὸ ever since, *the Creation of the World,* when they were fully communicated, *are clearly seen,* because after a Declaration of his Nature and Existence, the divine Attributes are plainly evinced, *being understood,* νοούμενα, explained to the Understanding, *by the things that are made,* ποιήμασι, the Works of God, or things which he had done, not only of Creation but of Providence, in the Deluge, in the wonderful Preservation of his Church, and Destruction of his Enemies, in his many Appearances, Miracles, and Interpositions with Mankind, which through all Ages had been related to them, and were a sensible Demonstration of Omniscience, Omnipotence, Invisibility, and Immateriality; *even his Eternal Power and Godhead,* which alone could effect such wonderful things. *So that they,* who had such Aids and Notices, might, through those Mediums, have made that discernible to the Mind, which was not visible to the Eye, and known they were the Works, not of visible Causes, but an invisible Agent; which they did not, and therefore *are without Excuse*: And the more so, because those very Works, which, from their Stupendousness, should have taught them the  
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Greatness of the former, were the Occasion of their paying that Homage to the Thing made, which could be due to the Worker only. They stopped here, adored the Universe as the one great God, and the Sun and Moon, as its principal Parts, and the Authors of Life; but never considered nor thought of that invisible Power and Godhead, which was necessary to produce such astonishing Beings; therefore they did not admire or adore the Creator, nor ever lifted their Minds beyond what was material and visible.

Euseb.  
Præp. 1. 3.  
c. 4.

V. Theo-  
doret. Ser.  
3. p. 42.

Vid. Cl.  
Alexand.  
Admonit.  
p. 42.

This is so true, that even *Porphyry* owned, the Heathens never once dreamed of any incorporeal Nature or invisible Power to be the Former of the World; and that the early *Egyptians*, *Phœnicians*, and *Greeks* had no other Gods but Heaven, and the Heavenly Bodies, *Plato*, *Diodorus Siculus*, and *Plutarch* abundantly testify. In this consisted the great original Difference between the true and false Religion, that tho' the Heathens owned Man to be formed for the Contemplation of Heaven, yet they adored only what was visible in Heaven, worshipped the Universe without enquiring for its Creator, and held the Sun as God, without considering or knowing the Framers of it.

Ver. 21. *Because that when they knew God, who had sufficiently manifested himself, they glorified him not as God, either in the Suitableness of their Notions, or Purity of their Worship. Neither were they thankful for the many Blessings received, especially their Attainments in Knowledge, which they attributed to their own Sagacity and Wisdom, and by not attending to what had been revealed, became vain in their Imaginations, διαλογισμοῖς, philosophical Discourses and Reasonings, which constantly led them into Error, and could never find out or explain one Truth; but in trusting to their Reason, they disputed themselves out of the Knowledge of Divine Things, and their foolish Heart was darkned,*  
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had so far extinguished the Light which God had given them, as not to be able to comprehend those distinguishing Perfections by which he had revealed himself; but placed Nature, or a monstrous Plurality, in his stead; that like the Eyes of the Blind, they could not see the Sun shining in its full strength, but the very Light which enables us to discern Objects, dazzled them the more.

Ver. 22. Thus *professing themselves to be wise*, in understanding the abstrusest Mysteries, whether of the Nature of God, or the Causes of Things, *they became Fools*, by giving so absurd and false an Explication of them. For the Proficiency they had made in human Sciences, made them daring to explain divine ones, and by depending on Reason for their Guide, fell into horrid Corruptions of Truth, and the most detestable Idolatries. The Wisdom of the World was entirely confined to sensible things, attributed all Excellencies to Body or Matter, and affirmed, that besides that there was nothing, whether it be called invisible or incorporeal. All their fictitious Deities were Parts of the Creation; and there cannot be greater Ignorance or Madness than to adore such instead of God, the Creator and Cause of all things visible and invisible. This is the Charge the Apostle has been drawing up against them, that notwithstanding the Means of Knowledge God had afforded, they were conversant only *περὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα, καὶ τὰ ἰδρύματα, καὶ περὶ τὰ δημιουργήματα τῆς Θεῆς*, Id. L. 5. p. 255. about Images and Statues, and the Works of God, but did not lift up their Mind to God. Id. L. 6. p. 321.

Ver. 23. *For they changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Men, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things.* Now to change is to put one thing for another, and so they did with God; they excluded him from his Place, and attributed his Glory, his Supereminence and Power to material Beings, the

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Universe as the first God, and to all its Parts, even the vilest Reptiles, as Portions of that God. This was their Guilt, and thus to err from the Truth, was the highest Unreasonableness and Folly; not only in supposing such despicable Things to be proper Representatives of the unfullied Splendours of the Deity; but also in blaspheming that holy Name, which they still retained, and had once been taught to reverence; by applying it to, and calling stupid Idols of their own making, their Gods and Saviours. Τῶν τὰς εἰκόνας θεῶν καὶ σωτῆρας ὀνόμα-

Theodo-  
ret, Serm.  
3 p. 41.  
Origen  
contra  
Celf. L. 3.  
p. 157.

σταν.  
Ver. 25. *Who changed the Truth of God into a Lye; in the stead of his eternal unchangeable Nature, they placed an Idol, a Falshood, a Vanity, a Nothing. It is true there is a God, it is a Lye that Nature which they worshipped is God. It is true that God is to be worshipped, it is a Lye to give this divine Honour to a Creature. It was impossible that a Creature should be God; but this Truth they converted into a Lye, by giving Adoration to it, and making that God, which was not so: For they worshipped and served the Creature, τῇ κτίσει, which may be also rendered, The Creation, or Universe, to which in the earliest Ages Divine Adorations were paid, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever; and every Creature is temporary, and has no Blessings but from him. Hereby they changed the Truth of the Divine Nature into a Falshood, by invoking Statues and Creatures as Gods, οἱ τοῖς ἀψύχοις ὡς θεῶν προσ-  
λαλῆντες;—καὶ ὡς θεοῖς τοῖς ἀγάλμασιν ἢ τοῖς ζώοις προσκυνῆντες, and thereby violated and altered all the Peculiarities of the Godhead.*

Orig. con  
Celf. L. 3.  
p. 157.

Ver. 28. The Apostle then shews them the moral Guilt of their Apostasy, ver. 28. *That they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge. They had known him, and might have retained him, but they liked it not, nor would attend to what was revealed:*

vealed: But they chose rather to depend on their own corrupted Reason and Imaginations, to guide them in and to these supernatural Truths; and by that means quickly lost Sight, and all right Understanding of the Divine Perfections, and that Practical Obedience which was congruous to them. This was an Act of their Judgment and Will, they rejected God in their Minds; and for this Cause he judicially rejected them, left them to themselves, gave them over to a reprobate Mind, and the Guidance of their own vain Wisdom, which they had placed in the Throne of God. But it was ἀδόκιμον, perverse, and contrary to right Reason, and soon hurried them into Idolatry and Brutality, to do those things which are not convenient, and notwithstanding all their boasted Morality, to commit and approve the most prodigious Immoralities, and filthy Impurities; many of which the Apostle enumerates, especially those of Uncleaness, vile Affections, and dishonouring their own Bodies between themselves, to which the Philosophers were incredibly addicted. *Qui se sapientes nominant, volutando se cum pueris in modum nefarium, masculi in masculos patrantur turpitudinem.* Which Chrysostome on this Place observes, was not only permitted by the wisest Nation in the World, the Athenians, but by Solon, the greatest among them; nor practised by the Vulgar only, but by the most divine Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Cebes and others, as shall be shewed in its proper Place.

Orig. cont.  
Cels. L. 7.  
P. 365.

From the whole it is observable, that the Apostle charges them with Ingratitude, or not making a suitable Return for Aids received, in not glorifying God according to the Knowledge they had of him, and which might have carried them to juster Apprehensions. That they did not so, was no Fault in God, who had revealed his Existence, and manifested his Perfections to them; nor of Nature which exhibited  
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so many Wonders, in Power, Wisdom, Beauty and Order, which vastly transcend the Mind of Man, the highest Work of God in this World, and should therefore have directed them to its most omnipotent Architect the Creator of Man, and Ruler of the Universe; yet they either wilfully shut their Eyes and stopped their Ears against these loud and clear Declarations; or, if they did attend to them, it was only to debase and disguise the Truth, by mixing so many Falshoods and wicked Delusions with it, that they were carried about with their own Superstition, as with the raging Waves of the Sea, perpetually fluctuating in Doubt, Ignorance and Error, giving the divine Worship of the only God to dead Men, or the several Parts of Nature; which Stubbornness and Ingratitude rendred them totally inexcusable, in being thus ignorant of God, whom they had sufficient Means of knowing, and prostituting his Honour to the vilest and most senseless Idolatries.

And then the Apostle justifies the Dealings of God with Men: they rejected the Knowledge of God, his Manifestations, and all the Means he offered; and therefore, as Punishment ought to bear proportion with Guilt, he in Judgment relinquished them; after which judicial Dereliction, they became Slaves to their own Lusts and vile Affections; all their Reason, their Wisdom and Philosophy, when destitute of Divine Aid, proved blind, reprobate, and cursed.

Nor was there a single Heathen, who confessed a Deity, exempt from this Crimination of holding the Truth in Unrighteousness. Sins against Knowledge are of the deepest Dye: and if *Socrates* or *Plato* knew (as some conceit) the true God, it was an Aggravation of their Crime; they were the guiltiest of Men, to join in the Superstition of the Age, hold Communion with Demons and Devils, or extend the same Honours equally to them and the

the Supreme Being. Surely they were ignorant of the first Thing which ought to be known, That Piety, Worship, and Sacrifice are due to him only; That no blessed or immortal Being besides him is capable of Adoration: Yet no Man adores what he does not esteem as God, and to adore a false God, is blasphemously to violate the Nature of the true one. Had they known God, they would have glorified him as such, and not joined in a Communion so irrational, its Mysteries so abominable, its Rites and Ceremonies so unbecoming and impious, that they could only proceed from the Suggestions of the Devil: The whole of their Religion was from him, none but so bad a Master being capable of teaching, or being pleased with it: Had they known God, they would not have been the Authors of Sin to others, by their Instruction, or Example to the Multitude, nor basely out of Fear connived at established Impieties; but have boldly confessed that the blessed Immortals above, and we wretched Mortals upon Earth, are bound to the Adoration of one only, the God of Gods.

The same Method of Argumentation appears in all *St. Paul's* Discourses with the Gentiles. He does not go about to prove the Existence of a Deity, because that was a Point confessed; and consequently does not tell them, they might come to the Knowledge of it, by considering the Greatness of God's Works, or by any other Method: But he constantly infers, that, by these Means, they who acknowledged his Existence, might have learned to worship him as God, and be thankful. That the Heavens and the Earth, the Variety of Seasons; and the numberless Blessings we enjoy, are clear Testimonies of his Majesty, Wisdom, Power and Goodness: That no other can be the Object of Religious Adoration, and that to place it elsewhere is Ingratitude and Idolatry.

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This was the End of his Reasoning with the People of *Lystra*, who were so far from Atheism that they believed the Apostles to be Gods come down to them in the Likeness of Men, and would have sacrificed to them as such; and consequently wanted no Information to believe their Existence, or that Worship was due to them: But of the true God, and that Service which would be acceptable to him, they were totally ignorant.

The Substance therefore of his Preaching was, *that they should turn from these Vanities*, the giving Divine Honours to mere Creatures, *unto the living God*, not to dumb Idols, or to dead Men, whom they had consecrated, and imagined to be of the same corporeal Shape with themselves; but to that eternal First Cause *which made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all Things that are therein*, the wonderful Glories of which declare the Wisdom and Omnipotence of him that formed them: And though his Nature be invisible, *Nevertheless he left not himself without Witness, in that he did good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with food and gladness*: Which Instances of his Bounty should dispose us to give Thanks to him alone, who is the Author and Giver of every Blessing.

So that in *St. Paul's* Sense the Book of Nature did not reveal God; but was a noble Testimony to the Revelation when made; and proved the Necessity of those Divine Perfections Mankind had been instructed in, though they remained invisible. But as Rain falling on the Desert does not render it fruitful, no more did the Means of Knowledge reached out to the World, serve to improve them in that true Wisdom, for which they were intended.

They knew there was a Deity, and the beholding the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of an Infinite

finite invisible Being, shining from the whole Universe, should have dispelled the Darkness of their Minds, and led them to a Confession and Knowledge of him. But instead of raising their Conceptions from the visible Wonders of Nature, to an Acknowledgment of the invisible Glory and Perfection of the great Author of them; they stopped short, and could not distinguish between the Power and Virtue which was from God, and that which is in God. But from observing the Order and Harmony of Nature, they concluded that Nature was God; and thence began to pay Divine Worship to its several Parts; though insensible, as Gods. This was the Error, he would turn them from: *And though in Times past God suffered all Nations to walk in their own Ways*, ver. 16. yet if for the future they did not serve the living God, and him only, they would be without excuse.

There is another famous Passage of St. Paul, so constantly appealed to, in the Question before us, that it must be particularly examined; I mean his Sermon at Athens, in Acts xvii. And the better to know the Force of the Apostle's Arguments, we must observe against whom he particularly opposes them, viz. the Epicureans and Stoicks, two of the most prevailing Sects of Philosophers in the World, and their Doctrines most opposite to Truth, the Nature of God; and the Intent of the Gospel.

Antipater in Plutarch, gives a summary but just Character of them, ὁ μὲν γὰρ τὸ εὐπορητικόν, ὁ δὲ τὸ ἀφθαρτὸν ἀφαιρέσκει τῶν Θεῶν, *The one took away the Goodness, the other the Eternity of the Gods.*

Stoic. Re- pug. P. 1052.

a God, that Matter was eternal, and the Gods corporeal and corruptible, φθαρτοὶ, that their Bodies were a Substance mutable, alterable, and changeable into every thing. And that these Bodies were in the Likeness of Men, was the constant Opinion of *Egypt* and *Greece*, through all the Ages of Idolatry. And *Cicero* enquiring into the Form of the Gods, makes *Velleius* assign this as a Reason for it, because they never appeared otherwise. Nature, says he, teaches us, that they are of human Shape, seeing all Nations represent them in that Form, nor do they occur to any Man sleeping or waking in any other Shape: and therefore the Apostle enforces this Truth, ver. 29. *That we ought not to think that the Godhead is like to Gold or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art and Man's Device.*

Nat. D. 1.  
1. n. 34

But another great and fundamental Error of Paganism, which the Apostle here opposes, and what had proved the strongest Foundation to Idolatry, was, that God neither did nor could create the World; which at once stripped the Deity of his most glorious Perfections, and at the same time shews the Vanity of that Argument, that Reason can discover God in and by his Works. Whereas not a Person in the World ever so much as dreamed of a Creator, and therefore Creation could never lead us to him. *Diodorus Siculus*, when he sums up the Opinions concerning the Origin of the World, never gives a hint of such an Artificer, neither mentions, nor thought of the Name of God. *Porphyry*, who may be allowed as an impartial Witness in this Case, affirms the same, That it had never entered into the Mind of any Man, that an incorporeal Nature should be the Former of the World. And *Eusebius* appeals to the Heathens, when he declares, “ That no Nation of the World, the Jews excepted, did look upon God as the “ Creator of the Universe.” There was not one Philosopher

Vid.  
Euseb.  
Præp. 1. 1.  
c. 8.

Id. 1. 3.  
c. 4.

Id. 1. 7.  
c. 3.



Philosopher who believed that God made it, but either that it was eternal, or its Matter coeval with God; or that the Universe, the τὸ πᾶν, was the Supreme God, before which nothing existed. The Stoicks especially maintained the τὸ ὄλον, to be the first πρῶτον, and principal God: Which indeed was the Catholick Faith of Paganism.

This is the Reason why the Scriptures distinguish the true God from false ones, by the Power of Creation, more than any other Attribute, as containing such various Proofs of the divine Existence and Perfections. To this *Moses* and the Prophets every where appeal, and *David* thus characterises him, *Psal. xcvi. 5. All the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens.* This *St. Paul* every where insists upon as the fullest Evidence he could bring against the Heathens, who so sacrilegiously robbed God of his very Essence, his Power and Godhead, *Rom. i. 20.* To the Men of *Lystra* he gives this Description of the Living God, *Acts xiv. 15.* that *he made Heaven and Earth, &c.* and here to the *Athenians*, ver. 23. The unknown God whom he preached and declared to them, was no other than this same God, *that made the World, and all things therein.*

So both Jews and Christians, in Opposition to Heathenism, always defined God by this Prerogative, in such like Forms, τὸ ὄλον Θεόν, *the God of all things.* And εἶν' ἄλλο σέβασιν, ἢ τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεόν, *Orig. cont. Cell. Id. l. 5. P. 234.* ὅς ἐποίησε τὸ ἔργον, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα, *the Christians worshipped no other than the God over all, who made Heaven, and all other things.* And when they would speak so as not to leave room for any Exception, it was sufficient to say, Θεὸν ἀναί τὸ Κύριον πάντων, *that God is the Lord of all things.* This *Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 689.* was a kind of Test in Religion: The Heathens dis- *Id. Strom. 5. p. 589.* avowed it, and whoever held ποιητὴν τὸ τῶν ὄλων Θεόν, *that God was the Maker of all things,* was guilty of Heresy, and stood under the Correction of *Aristotle* and the Philosophers.

As therefore the Apostle's Intent was to turn his Hearers to the Knowledge and Service of the Living God ; in order to this it was necessary to convince them of his Supereminence above others : And no Argument could carry a fuller Conviction of this Truth than what he offers. The Application to them was, Observe the Difference between these Deities ; you confess your Gods unable to create the World, and you hold either that, or the Matter whereof it is composed, to be Eternal, and worship the Heavenly Bodies, or Corporeal Deities, or dead Idols, the Work of Mens Hands.

We teach and believe in one living God, spiritual in his Nature, supreme in his Dignity, who by his Power made the Heavens and the Earth, and all things therein, who governs the whole by a wise steady Providence, gives Life to every Being, and is the Author of every Blessing. The Greatness and Order of these Works which you behold, are the noblest Attestations of those infinite Perfections we ascribe to him, in Power, Wisdom, Invisibilty, &c. He that made all things, must be himself unmade, self-existing ; he that created the World, must be omnipotent ; he that contrived and governs it, infinite in Wisdom and Goodness, &c. These render him the only proper Object of Adoration ; and it is reasonable for us to give it, that we may thereby obtain his Grace and Favour, under whose Protection and Disposal we are.

But the Apostle had just Reason to oppose these prevailing Sects on many other Accounts ; for they were of all others the greatest Enemies to Christianity, which taught Men to attain true Beatitude thro' the Assistance of Divine Grace, and the Meditation of an all-sufficient Redeemer. Whereas the Stoicks presumptuously boasted, that Man by his own Virtue (though they destroyed all Virtue in denying the Freedom of Will and Liberty of Choice)

Choice) could attain Happiness: That their wise Men came no way short of *Jupiter*: That they owed nothing to God for their Wisdom; nor could *Jupiter* do more than a good Man. Such were their proud swelling Words; they made their own Virtue their God, which was the most cursed Piece of carnal-Mindedness and Idolatry. And from this poisonous Root of spiritual Pride, Pelagianism sprang up in After-ages.

So of the *Epicureans*: They took from the immortal Gods both Assistance and Grace. *Diis immortalibus & opem & gratiam sustulit*, says *Cicero*; and whilst they affirmed the Nature of God to be most excellent, denied to him what must be essential to the best and most excellent Nature. They denied a Providence, affirmed the World was not made by God; that in this Life there was no Good; but what was sensible; that the Soul was not immortal; and that after Death there were neither Rewards nor Punishments. Such a Blasphemy of God; such a Destruction of all Religion, so debauched and vain were these Sects of Philosophy, as if they endeavoured to eradicate all Fear and Reverence, nay the very Notion of a Supreme Being out of the World; that it is no wonder the Apostle encounters them in an especial Manner.

And so superstitiously mad was the whole World, that there were more Gods than Men in it: Tho' they worshipped all kinds of Creatures as Gods, the Beasts in the Field, the Fishes in the Sea, the Birds in the Air, and the Plants in the Garden; yet, lest they should miss some one or other, they erected Altars to the *Unknown God, and Gods*. From this particular Superstition, *St. Paul* takes an opportunity to instruct the *Athenians* in the Nature of the true God, who seemed the only one unknown to them.

Ver. 22. *I perceive*, says he, *that in all things ye are too superstitious*, more addicted to the Worship

of Gods or Demons, than other Cities. For as I passed by, and beheld your Devotions, your Worship, or Deities, your Idols or Dæmons, which they called Gods, for so the Word *σέβασμα* signifies, not the Worship itself, but that which is worshipped, and is so used by the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, xiv. 20. who mentioning the Carving of Idols, says, *they took him now for σέβασμα, a God.* St. Paul, *2 Thess. ii. 4.* *θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, God, or any thing that is worshipped,* not the Worship. Among which false Deities, I found an Altar with this Inscription, *To the Unknown God, a God not yet come to their Knowledge; Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, ἀγνοῦντες, not knowing what he is, him declare I unto you, and restore the venerable Name to God that made the World and all the things therein, hitherto unknown amongst you, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, and dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands; for he that is infinite in Power, and immense in his Nature, cannot be confined in Temples, or Statues, or Shrines, as the Heathens thought their Gods were, like Birds in a Cage, by a kind of magical Consecration: Neither is worshipped with Mens Hands, by Images, or other Representations of human Make, as tho' he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all Life and Breath, and all things; and therefore can want nothing from them who receive all things from him.*

“Οὐκ ἔν ἀγ-  
νοῦντες  
εἰσεβῆτε.

Ver. 26. *And hath made of one Blood, from Adam and Noah, all Nations of Men to dwell on all the Face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation.* By the Counsel of his own Wisdom he hath disposed and upheld the Race of Men in Times and Seasons, in their several Bounds and Possessions, not by any rigid Fate, as the Stoicks held, but by an unerring, just and bountiful Providence. And thence persuades them,

Ver.

Ver. 27. *That they should seek the Lord*, this God that made the World, *if haply*, by chance, as Men blind, or in the dark grope after things, *they might feel after him, and find him*, which therefore, after all their painful Searches after Wisdom, they had not hitherto done ; though the Manifestations of him, in the Effects of his Presence and Power, are not remote from our Observations ; *though* (*καίτοι*, *quamquam*, *quia*, because) *he be not far from every one of us ; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being ;* it being essential to a Creature as such, to have its whole Dependence upon God.

*As certain also of your own Poets have said, For we also are his Offspring*, of Jehovah the Unknown God ; not *Jove*, to whom *Aratus* the Poet ignorantly attributed the Government of the World. And if Man, the principal Work of the lower Creation, be of God's forming, the Apostle's Conclusion must necessarily follow, *That we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Man's Art or Device* : It being unreasonable to think the Artificer is not more excellent than what he forms : And for the same reason, that the Gods are in the shape of Men, who are so far removed from, and inferior to Divinity ; and above all, it is most irrational for Man, the Offspring of God, to worship an Idol of his own making, for and instead of God.

From the whole we may infer, that the wiser of these blind *Grecians* knew there was a God, but what or who he was, they never knew ; nor where to find, nor what to make of him ; but thought him either *Saturn*, or *Jupiter*, or the Sun, or any thing but what he really was : Nor with all their natural or acquired Wisdom could they attain any right Idea or Notion of God, what he was, or where to be found.

And

And if at *Athens*, the Eye of the World, the Mistress of Learning, the School of Wisdom and of Nature, they were totally ignorant of the true God, it cannot be expected that other Nations should be acquainted with him; nor that the Light of Nature, Philosophy, or the Disquisitions of the most elevated Minds, should be sufficient for these things; if God was unknown to them, who were most capable (without a divine Aid) of knowing him, yet they continued blind, and groping in the dark to no purpose.

Herbert  
Relig.  
Gentil. c.  
13. p. 267.

Id. 269.

This has brought such Difficulties on some modern Schemes, that they who undertake the Defence of Paganism, and must not allow them to be ignorant of the true God; because if they did, their whole System, calculated to oppose Revelation, would fall to the Ground; cannot help stumbling at this Objection, and grant that the Heathens had but very lame and imperfect Notions of the Supreme God: That the Rays of the Divinity were intercepted by a dark Cloud, and the Minds of Men involved in a profound Ignorance; yet being instructed by the Book of Nature, they arrived to the Knowledge of the Supreme God, but not the God of the Jews, because he was unknown to them, and it would be a little strain'd to suppose this unknown Deity to be the God of *Israel*. Such lame and imperfect Notions of a God very well indeed correspond with an unknown God; and the true God was always *Deus incertus*. But why should we suppose *St. Paul* preached two Supreme Beings, one to the Gentiles, another to the Jews? He had been taught to believe one only, the Creator of Heaven and Earth; and by this Character he distinguishes him to the *Athenians*. He is teaching them to receive the God of the Jews, but as manifested under the Gospel through Jesus Christ: *Because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World with Righte-*

*Righte-*

*Righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained: Whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, Gentiles as well as Jews, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* They had not a Deity, but what was a δαίμων, and from this δαισιδαίμονια, *Superstition towards Demons*, he endeavours to convert them, and for their Encouragement adds, Ver. 30. *The Times of this Ignorance (of him and his Worship) God winked at.*

There are indeed Men of great Learning, who conclude, that the Apostle here plainly confesses their worshipping of the true God. But how does the Argument stand? He was unknown to them, therefore they knew him. They worshipped him ignorantly, without knowing whom or how to do it; therefore they worshipped the true God. And thus by the Light of Nature discovered, they knew not what, that is, nothing at all, an ignorant Worship for an unknown God; they found in the dark what they never saw or felt: And thus Knowledge and Ignorance are the self-same thing.

Voff. Idol.  
l. 1. c. 2.

But the Apostle's Intention is evident: The Altar confessed their Worship of an unknown God, which was the Excess of Ignorance and Superstition; but whence they might be convinced, that a God unknown to them or their Fathers, might yet be a God to be worshipped. He lays hold on this Occasion, to declare what God was unknown to them, and persuade them to worship him only, viz. The God that made the World and all Things therein, which was a Deity, that neither *Egypt* nor *Athens* before that time had ever heard of: And this was no more than what *St. Paul* every where repeats and affirms, that ἐκ ἕγνω ὁ κόσμος, *he was a God whom the World did not know*, 1 Cor. i. 21. And to the *Galatians* iv. 8. ἐκ εἰδότες Θεόν, *that they knew not God*, &c. which are a plain Comment on the

Vid. Ham-  
mond of  
Superstiti-  
on, vol. 1.  
p. 245.

the unknown God of the *Athenians*, and the Truth is, they knew not the true God of Heaven.

Though if ever the *Greeks* came near the true Knowledge and Name of the Supreme God, it was under that of *Zeus Sabazius*, the most rational Derivation of which, is from the *Hebrew Isebaoth*, or *Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts: Which however *Aristophanes* took notice of as a strange and foreign God, lately crept in amongst them, and who ought to be banished out of *Greece*.

But what may properly be inferred from this Passage, in behalf of Natural Religion, we may safely take from one who was willing and (if ever any were) able, to establish it on a sure and solid Foundation; the great Dr. *Clarke* in a Discourse on these very Words; “ *Athens*, says he, was at that time the Seat of Learning in *Greece*, the great Resort of Philosophers of all Sects, and of the ablest and most accomplished Men in every part of Literature. Whatever the Light of Nature or Reason, assisted with all the Helps of acquired Learning, could possibly discover concerning the Nature of God and of true Religion, might naturally have been expected to be met with here. Here, if in any part of the World, it was reasonable to imagine, might have been found Numbers of Men free from the Contagion of those gross Superstitions and absurd Idolatries, which had overspread the ignorant and unlearned World. But on the contrary, in fact, it appears from this History of *St. Paul*, and from the agreeing Account, which all other ancient Writers give us of this Matter; that this School of Reason and Philosophy, this eminent Seat of Learning, was it self as deeply overwhelmed, and buried in Superstition and Idolatry, as any other Part of the less learned World. The obvious Inference from which Observation, is, “ the

Vol. 2.  
Serm. 33.  
p. 217.



“ the Usefulness and Necessity of Revelation : For  
“ how true soever it be (as most true and certain  
“ it is) that the Principles of true Religion are per-  
“ fectly agreeable to Nature and Reason, and may  
“ even demonstrably be deduced from thence by  
“ irresistible Arguments ; yet so it was, that few  
“ or none of these most learned Philosophers, ei-  
“ ther themselves saw and traced this Light of  
“ Reason and Truth, or dared to discover and re-  
“ commend it to others. From whence it evi-  
“ dently appears, that those right Notions concern-  
“ ing God and the natural Obligations of Religi-  
“ on, which are now so plain and obvious in Rea-  
“ son, that they are urged by many as an Argu-  
“ ment against the Needfulness of any Revelation  
“ at all, are themselves generally borrowed from the  
“ Light of Revelation, even by those who use  
“ them as an Argument against it.”

Can any thing more abundantly prove the Insufficiency of Reason, notwithstanding all the external Aids of the Book of Nature, and the Fitness of things ? And when we find these great Defenders and Ornaments of Reason, making such Retreats as are utterly inconsistent with the boasted Powers of it ; will it not justify others in endeavouring to satisfy their Minds, and account for these Truths by different Means of Knowledge, wherein there may be no Darkness or Perplexity, but something obvious, rational, and certain ?

But there are several Passages in this Sermon that deserve a more particular Consideration, as being constantly used to shew how far human Learning can teach any Place or People the Divine Truths of God. *Athens* had been long the Seat of Wisdom, where it had been carried to its highest Elevation, and was for many Ages looked upon as the School of Learning and Religion for the rest  
of

of the World. Whence such pompous Epithets were given to it by *Euripides*, Ελλάδα (Ἑλλάς), the Greece of Greece; by *Diodorus*, Κοινὸν πάντων ἀνθρώπων παιδευτήριον; by *Thucydides*, παίδευσις Ἑλλάδος (Ἑλλάς); by *Strabo*, σοφῶν διηγήριον; and by the *Spartans*, one of the Eyes of Greece.

But as *Dæmon-Worship* was the Offspring of vain Philosophy and Reasoning, *Rom.* i. 21. so wherever these flourished most, there did Idolatry also; human Sciences, and spiritual Blindness growing up equally together, which was the State of *Athens*, and what raised the Apostle's Indignation, *Ver.* 16. when he saw the City wholly given to Idolatry, κατείδωλον, full of Idols and Altars. The Idol was an Object of Adoration; and the Altar, a Witness that what it was erected to, was a God, and that they took the Idol or Statue for a God. *Ara est, quæ testatur, pro Numine id haberi cui erigitur. Nam illi (scilicet Ethnici) quod Numen habeant, & pro Numine accipiant illam statuam, ara testatur. Quid illic faciat ara, si illud non habeatur pro Numine, &c.* And at *Athens* there were numberless Statues of the same God, as of *Mercury*. They were in every Street and Lane, says *Plutarch*.

The first Altar at *Athens* was built by *Cecrops* the *Egyptian*, where they so prodigiously multiplied, that *Pausanias* who took an accurate Survey of the Country, says there were more of these εἰδωλα, Images and Altars there, than in all *Greece* beside; they were fond of strange Gods, yet worshipped no one without an Image to represent him. It was the Custom of the *Greeks*, says *Maximus Tyrius*, to worship the Gods in the purest Matter, of human Shape, and with the most exquisite Art. These increased to so excessive a Number, that *Athens* was called the Country and Shop of the Gods; and *Xenophon* complained that they had made the whole City but one Altar. *Cicero* calls it,

*Urbs*

Vid.  
Athen.  
p. 178.

Justin. 15.  
c. 8.

Augustin  
Tom. 10.  
Ser. 6.  
Vid. Alci-  
biad. Diod.  
Sic. 1. 13.  
c. 1.

Euseb. pr.  
l. 10. c. 9.  
p. 486.  
Attic.

Differt.  
38.

*Urbs fanorum repleta*, a City crammed with Temples; and one in *Petronius* observed, our Country is so filled with Deities, that you may easier find a God than a Man; and it was truly the *Panttheon* of the World, having one Temple in common to all the Gods.

De Rep. Athen. De Arusp. Respon. Pausan. Attic.

Hence the Oracle might well call *Athens*, τὴν κοινήν ἑστίαν τῆς Ἑλλάδος, the common Altar of Greece; *Sophocles* styles it the sacred Building of the Gods; as *Hegesias* did *Attica*, the Work of the Gods and the ancient Heroes. These were the Gods of *Athens*; and its Religion, the Worship of them, being wholly given to Idolatry.

Ælian. l. 4. c. 6. Strabo l. 9. p. 396.

Ver. 18. *A Setter forth of strange Gods*, ξένων δαιμονίων, foreign Demons, to which their itching Ears gave immediate Attention, being above all others superstitiously disposed to admit foreign Gods and Worship into their own. As *Strabo* notes that their Hospitality to Strangers extended to the Gods, πολλὰ τῶν ξενικῶν ἱερῶν παρεξέλιτο, in receiving many strange Gods or Worships. Their Superstition had not only adopted all the monstrous Fictions of Antiquity, but they themselves continually added new ones.

L. 10.

The *Romans* on the contrary were unkind to strange Gods, and did not receive them but with Difficulty, that they might be said, μισοξενεῖν ἢ φιλοξενεῖν, to be Haters rather than Lovers of them: And *Dion Cassius* says, one of the blackest Crimes of *Sardanapalus*, was introducing into *Rome* the Worship of *Heliogabalus*; and though he was a foreign God, he revered him more religiously than any other, so far as to set him above *Jupiter*.

Dion. Halicarnaf.

L. 2. p. 351.

But by the Law of *Athens* no foreign God or Worship was to be admitted, till approved and licensed by the *Areopagus*, which had the sole Power in religious Matters; and according to *Demosthenes*, no one had ever complained of any unjust Sentence given

In Aristocrat.

given by that Court; yet the severest Laws were enacted at *Athens*, and every Citizen commanded on Pain of Death to worship the Gods and Heroes as the Laws of the City required: And they who observed not the appointed Ceremonies, were immediately dragged to the Court of *Areopagus*. The cutting a Twig out of a sacred Grove, was a capital Offence; even a Fool has been condemned for killing one of *Æsculapius's* Sparrows. And a Child accidentally taking up a Plate of Gold fallen from *Diana's* Crown, was put to Death for Sacrilege.

From these Admissions arose the different Titles of the Gods, *Patrii*, those of the Country, and *Peregrini*, Foreigners or strange Gods: There were also older Gods, *παλαιότεροι*, and newer ones, *νεώτεροι*; the *Dii Patrii* were commended for the Ancientness of their Worship; but the *Peregrini* were new Gods, in regard they were lately procured or chosen. And at *Athens* there was a vast multitude of these new strange Gods, whom they termed, *ξένοι* or *ξενίων θεών*. *Apollophanes* the Poet had put together their Names and Series in his *Cretensibus*, as *Hesychius* testifies in *θεοὶ ξενίων*; and those are what *Cicero* says were disquieted by *Aristophanes*; so that *Sabazius*, and some others of them, were by him judged strange, and had been ejected out of the City.

De Leg.  
l. 2.

This Court assembled on the Hill of *Mars*, because that God was indicted and tried for Murder by a Jury of twelve Gods, but acquitted; and here were *Socrates* and others tried for invading Religion, and undervaluing the Gods.

Ver. 19. Hither was *St. Paul* brought, as a Publisher of foreign Gods and Doctrines, *Jesus*, and the Resurrection, to be examined concerning them; though perhaps (as the Proceedings of the Court had been much altered since the Days of *Socrates*) not as a Criminal but a Benefactor, in having a  
new

new Worship to propose to a People zealous above all others in what they call Religion, as some have ingeniously conjectured. But the other Opinion seems preferable, that he was carried thither, as a Babler, and a Sower of Sedition, and by putting new Notions into Mens Heads, before they had been legally authorized, was a Disturber of the Peace, and had offended the Laws of the State.

Warburton divine Legat. 284.

Dr. Bentley, Sermon 2. p. 9. (and with him agrees Dr. Whitby) says, " They too well understood the Notion of a Resurrection, to worship it as a Goddes." But those learned Persons should first have shewn how they came not to understand the Notion of a Fever, or a Jakes, too well to worship them for Goddeffes. They knew it, just as Epimenides did the true God, in erecting an Altar to the unknown one, and at the same time building Temples to the most shameful Vices.

Annot.

Ver. 22. He addressess himself in these remarkable Words, *Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious*, *δεισιδαιμονεστεροις*, more addicted to the Worship of Demons, or to the Worship of more Demons, than others. Both which Acceptations are true: For Pausanias says, that they did worship the Gods more than others. And Josephus, that all Men say they are the most pious of all the Grecians: And Sophocles, that this City goes beyond all in worshipping and honouring the Gods.

In Attic: 2. cont. Appion. in Oedip.

The Word has sometimes been used for Religion in general, but is here put in Opposition to true Piety. *Religio veri Dei cultus est, superstitio falsi*. " Their Gods were false, and the Worship an idolatrous Superstition." *Virgil* makes it consist in being ignorant of the ancient Gods. *Vana superstitio, veterumque ignara Deorum*. Athens however adored all the Gods that Madness or Folly had ever invented.

Lactant. 1. 4. P. 402.

R

But

But *δεισιδαιμονία* signifies more than *Demonum cultus*, viz. a slavish Fear of Demons, or dead Heroes, and was so understood by the most learned Christians,  $\Phi\beta\text{C}\text{C}$  δαυμόνων ἔσα. And again,  $\alpha\text{D}\text{E}\text{C}$  is one that does not think there is a God, *δεισιδαίμων* δὲ ὁ δεδιώς τὰ δαυμόνια, ὁ πάντα δειζών, κ' ξύλον, κ' λίθον, κ' πνεῦμα, ἀνδρωπῶν τε, &c. one that fears Demons, and makes Gods of every thing, Wood, Stone, Spirit, Man, &c. the Word is derived from *δέιδω*, to fear, and *δαίμων*, a Demon; so *Plutarch* makes it a troublesome fearful Opinion of the Gods, which supposes there are Gods, but *δαίματα*, Furies, Sprights, cruel and ill-natured ones. And therefore the Apostle might well charge them with it, whose Religion consisted wholly therein. They believed Demons to be true Gods; and Superstition worships a Creature as God. *Religio Deum colit, superstitio violat.*

Clem.  
Alex.  
Strom. 2.  
p. 379.  
Id. Strom.  
7. p. 701.

De Super-  
stit. in  
Init. p.  
165.

Ver. 23. *An Altar, with this Inscription, To the unknown God.* It was a Custom among the Ancients, to engrave on the Altar, the Name of the God to whom it was dedicated, which at *Athens* in particular was necessary, to distinguish them amidst a Conflux of the most remote and strange ones from all Parts of the World. The same Altar was frequently dedicated to many, as one by *Pisistratus*, in the Market-place, to the twelve Gods; and *βωμὸς τῶν δώδεκα Θεῶν*, frequently occurs. The *Eleans*, *Arcadians*, *Athenians*, *Corinthians*, and *Lacedemonians*, had Altars in common to all the Gods.

Thucyd.  
l. 6.

Plutarch.  
in Nicia.

Pausan.

*Βωμοὶ Θεῶν παῶσιν ἐν κοινῷ.*

Vit. Apol-  
lon. l. 6.  
c. 7.

In Attic.

Amidst this Variety, there was one to the unknown God, and probably there were many of them: *Philostratus* says, at *Athens* there were Altars of unknown Gods or Demons, *ἀγνώστων δαυμόνων βωμοὶ*, and *Pausanias* mentions them in the Plural Number, *Θεῶν ἀγνώστων βωμοὶ*, Altars of the unknown Gods; by which also *Grotius* thinks might be de-

noted many Altars Θεῷ ἀγνώστῳ; Critias in *Lucian* swears νῆ ἑ ἀγνώστου ἐν Ἀθήναις, by the God unknown to the Athenians. Yet *Triepho* at the Close of the Dialogue, says, “ We having found out the “ God unknown at Athens, and worshipped him “ with Hands stretched up to Heaven, will give “ thanks to him, as having been thought worthy “ to be made subject to his Power.” But as it is plain, the former knew not that God; so the latter, through the whole Dialogue, appears to have been instructed in Christianity; or the Author, whoever he be, was one, and put these Words into the Mouth of his Interlocutor.

Philopatri, vol. 2. p. 769.

Or if the whole Inscription ran, according to *Occumenius*,

In Acta.

ΘΕΟΙΣ ΑΣΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΡΩΠΗΣ  
 ΚΑΙ ΛΙΒΤΗΣ  
 ΘΕΩ ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ  
 ΚΑΙ  
 ΞΕΝΩ.

To the Gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa, to the unknown and strange God: The crowding him among all the Demons in the World, proves them to be totally ignorant of his Nature; as the placing him among the strange ones, does, that they had received him from others, and were not Authors of the Discovery.

There are several Reasons given for the erecting such Altars. But the most probable is, their superstitious Fear of omitting any God, which, amidst the Uncertainty of so many different Religions, might easily have been done; or it might proceed from their not knowing what God to ascribe some remarkable Benefit or Deliverance to, and therefore in Gratitude erected an Altar to the unknown One.

*Diogenes Laertius* gives this Account of their Rise: In Epime-  
 “ That *Epimenides* staid a Plague among the nide.

“ *Athenians* in this manner. He took a black  
 “ and white Sheep to *Areopagus*, whence he let  
 “ them go which way they would; commanding  
 “ those that followed them, that wheresoever they  
 “ lay down, they should sacrifice them πρὸ περσῆ-  
 “ κωντι Θεῶ, to some fit and proper God. The  
 “ Calamity ceased, and to this very Day, says *La-*  
 “ *ertius*, there are Altars to be found without Name,  
 “ which were then made in Memory of this Ex-  
 “ piation.” The Pestilence was undoubtedly stop-  
 ped by the true and living God; but does it not  
 obviously occur, that neither *Epimenides*, nor they,  
 knew the Author of this Event, whether *Saturn*,  
*Jupiter*, or which among the Host of Gods, and  
 therefore ascribed it to a meet God, but they could  
 not tell who. *Epimenides* was a *Cretan*, and they  
 were religious Worshipers of that *Jupiter* they  
 had given the World; and if *Solon*, the wisest Man  
 in *Greece*, who lived in the same Age, Olympiad 46,  
 was ignorant of the true God, it is hard to con-  
 ceive otherwise of *Epimenides*, by whose Advice the  
*Athenians* built Temples to Contumely and Impu-  
 dence: Ἰερῶν καὶ Ἀνασιδείας.

Cic. de  
 Leg. l. 2.

In eod.

Rhetor.  
 l. 3. c. 17.  
 p. 466.

Divinat.  
 l. 1.

Vit. Solon.

Let us see whether his Character will afford any  
 ground for such Supposition. *Laertius* indeed says,  
 that he was γνωσικώτατος, *divinandi peritissimus*, most  
*skilful in divining*, and θεοφιλέστατος, *most dear to the*  
*Gods*; and that the *Cretans* sacrificed to him as to  
 a God, ὡς Θεῶ. *Aristotle* says, he did not prophesy  
 or divine of Futurities, but of what was past and  
 obscure. *Cicero*, That as there were two Methods  
 of divining, one by Art, and the other without  
 it, by an enthusiastick Motion of the Mind, or  
 Madness; that *Epimenides* was of the latter Sort:  
*Quod & somniantibus sæpe contingit, & nonnunquam*  
*vaticinantibus per furorem; ut Bacis Bæotius, ut Epi-*  
*menides Cres, ut Sibylla Erythræa; and Plutarch,*  
 that he was skilful in religious Matters, both fana-  
 tical,



tical, and mystical, περι τὰ θεῖα, τὴν ἐνθεσιαστικὴν, καὶ τελεστικὴν σοφίαν; and that after lustrating the City, he would ask no Presents in Money, but only asked a Bough of the holy Olive. The Sum of which is, that he was an excellent Priest, Augur, and Soothsayer, skilful in all the Superstitions and Mysteries of Idolatry; from whence I think it cannot be inferred, that he was an Evangelist of the true God; or if so, it is evident that he left him unknown to the *Athenians*.

Another Original of these Altars is said to be on this Occasion: The *Athenians* sending to ask Aid from the *Lacedemonians*, the Form of *Pan* met the Ambassadors, and complained that they worshipped other Gods, but neglected him; however he promised his Assistance, if they amended for the future: Wherefore after their Victory, not being certain to whom they owed it, they erected an Altar to the unknown God. What is this but a Legend suited to the Darkness of the Times? If *Pan* were the true God, they did not worship him, nor come at the Knowledge of him by Reason or Nature, but from Hobgoblins and Apparitions, and *Jehovah* was preached by Messengers from *Pluto*.

Nor was this Custom peculiar to *Greece*, but observed by the *Romans* also, in the immediate Erection of Altars on any sudden Benefit received; as that to Adoption mentioned by *Tacitus*, l. 1. and another to Revenge, l. 3. So the ancient *Romans* when they felt an Earthquake, betook themselves by publick Command to religious Observances, but did not, as on other Occasions was usual, name the God, to whom they dedicated such Solemnities, lest by mistaking one for another, they might oblige the People to a false Worship; and as it was uncertain by what Power, or God, Earthquakes happened, they offered Sacrifice to an un-

Oecumen.  
in Acta.

A. Gell.  
l. 2. c. 28.

certain Deity, in the ancient Form, *si Deo, si Deæ*, which was by the Decree of the Priests, says *Varro*.

The *Latins* had also many Altars, *Diis Deabusque omnibus; & Dibus Deabusque omnibus; & Herculi invicto, & cæteris Diis*: And the most learned among them, *Tully*, was under the same Ignorance and Diffidence, when he advised his *Terentia* to return thanks to some God or other, that had given her Relief in her Disorder, but could not tell who, whether *Apollo* or *Æsculapius*. But, *cui quidem tu Deo, quemadmodum soles, piè & castè satisfacias velim.*

Epist. 7.  
l. 14.

So among the *Carthaginians*, it was customary, if they did not prosper by worshipping the Gods they did know, to sacrifice to them they did not know. After the Defeat of *Imilco* in *Sicily*, and their being invaded, they immediately set about atoning *Ceres* and *Proserpine*, whom they had never adored before; and having exposed all the Statues of the Gods, ordered them to be worshipped after the *Grecian* Manner.

Diod. Sic.  
l. 14. c. 7.  
P. 391.

The Ignorance of the Divine Nature made this Uncertainty run through the whole of their Religion; Many were *Dei involuti*, they knew not whom they should adore, therefore to their Prayers added, *Sive tu Deus es, sive Dea*; and in their publick Devotions when they doubted the Name, the Form was, *Dis. Pater. ve Jovis. Manes. sive. vos. Quo. alio. nomine. fas. est. nominare.* As also, when the Sex of their Gods was dubious, many of them being *Hermaphrodites*, they mentioned both, as *Onomacritus* in his Hymn to *Minerva* thus bespeaks her, *Ἀρσὴν μὲν καὶ θῆλυς ἔφουε, or ἔφουε.*

Senec.  
Nat. Qu.  
l. 2. c. 42.  
Arnob.  
l. 3.  
Macrob.  
l. 3.

A. Gell.  
l. 2. c. 28.

Boxhorn.

And we meet with this Inscription.

} *Sive Deo.*  
} *Sive Deæ.*  
} *C. Ter. Dexter.*  
} *Ex voto.*

In

In the same Manner Ovid,

——— *Quisquis fuit ille Deorum.*

Metam.  
l. 2.

And Virgil,

——— *Sequimur te, sancte Deorum,*  
*Quisquis es*———

Æn. 4.  
v. 576.

Innumerable Passages of the same kind every where occur ; and *A. Gellius* justly tells us, who these unknown Gods were, *viz.* They whose Names were uncertain, or it was not lawful to declare them: *Noct. At.* Nay he whose Sex was doubtful, was called an unknown God. *l. 2. c. 28.*

From which it seems very evident, that the *Athenians*, by their Unknown God, intended some Deity, who they supposed had been propitious to them, yet not being certain of his Name, and that no Offence might be given, they called him unknown.

Yet it is perpetually hinted, as if this Altar were peculiar to *Athens*, and something might be inferred from its being only in a Place, where the Sciences were carried to their highest Elevation: But this is a great Mistake, such Altars and Gods being common all over the World ; and were so many that *Varro* wrote a Book of the unknown Gods, and another of the uncertain ones. In the *Attick Pagi* there were many Altars without Names. Near the great Altar of *Jupiter* at *Olympus*, there was one to the Unknown Gods ; and the *Arcadians* worshipped a Statue without a Name. *Civ. D. l. 6. c. 3. Not. Id. l. 7. c. 17. Pausan. Eliac. Id. Arcad.*

And both *Pausanias* in *1 Eliac.* and *Theagenes* in *Lib. de Diis*, mention two Cities among the *Lydians*, in which was a large Temple with Altars in them, and Ashes thereon quite different from the common Sort, &c. and here the Priest invoked the unknown God, reciting out of a Book some barbarous Form, in a Language utterly unknown to

the *Greeks*; and that as soon as he prayed, a bright Flame shone round, and consumed the Wood he had laid upon the Altar, without any Fire being put to it.

P. 164.

Wolf.  
Cent. 1.

*Strabo* mentions this Custom of the *Celtiberians*, that upon the Full-Moon they worshipped an unknown or nameless God, ἀνονόμῳ τινὶ Θεῷ, by dancing all Night before their Doors in unseemly Postures; The *Persians*, *Arabians*, and other Easterns had their unknown God. The People of *Marseilles* in *Gaul*, openly professed their Worship of unknown Gods, and found that this inspired them with a greater Fear of their Deities. They worshipped them at a Distance, and did not come near the Place where their Statues stood. The Priest did not approach them without trembling, and dreaded their appearing to him, that is, dreaded the knowing of them. And at *Bourdeaux*, amongst other Demon Altars there was one to an unknown God, which stood with the rest till they were all demolished by the Command of *Martial* Bishop of *Limosin*. And if we pass into *America*, we shall find the People of *Peru* and others to have also an unknown God, as well as politer Nations.

Garcilas,  
l. 2.

So that the Argument will prove too much; if the *Athenians* knew the true God, because they had an Altar to an unknown one, it will follow, that all others, even the most barbarous and savage were for the same Reason acquainted with him: though if we would speak strictly of these devout Idolaters, they knew no more of either, known or unknown Gods, than the Statue and the Name, all their Thoughts and Ideas of a Divine Nature being so infinitely distant from it: And *Sophocles*, at the Beginning of his *Menalippa*, made a Confession which extended to all Men,

*Jove,*

*Jove, of whom we here below,  
Nothing besides the Name do know.*

Ζεὺς ὅστις ἐστίν, εἰ γὰρ οἱ δὲ ἀπλὴν λόγῳ.

Barnes  
Edit. v. 2.  
p. 479.  
Philopat.  
v. 2.  
p. 768.

So *Triepho* in *Lucian* was quite ignorant of every thing relating to *Minerva*, but her Name.

Ver. 28. *As certain also of your own Poets have said, For we also are his Offspring*, not of *Jove*, but *Jehovah*, the unknown true God, whom he preached unto them; which is only carrying on the Allusion, and shewing how, on their own Principles, they might acknowledge him: And the Apostle might justly approve what had been truly but ignorantly wrote by any of their Authors; as many sublime and most exalted Sentences there are in *Plato* and others, notwithstanding their Idolatry: So *St. Paul* teacheth *Titus* to convince the *Cretans* out of their own Poets, *Tit. i. 12.*

vid. Cl.  
Alexand.  
Strom. 1.  
p. 315.

Yet however visionary it may be to imagine, that *Aratus* the Poet knew the true God, and referred his *Zeus* to him who made the World and all things therein, great Pains have been taken by learned Men to apply it in that Sense. But does it follow, that because the Words Θεός, *Deus*, or *God*, are applicable to the true one, that they were so intended by the Heathens? Are not many things spoken of Idols, or *Jupiter*, as *Optimus*, *Maximus*, &c. which cannot without Blasphemy be attributed to them? The same Appellations which are given to one properly and pioussly, may be transferred to another improperly and impioussly; but are they therefore the same?

vid. Seld.  
Diis Syr.  
Syntag. 1.  
c. 6. p.  
203.

Even the illustrious *Selden* confesses, that the Inscription *To the Unknown God*, was brought to pass by the Delusion of *Demons*, or *Devils*; and yet the Apostle takes an Opportunity to cite it: Can we then otherwise imagine but that these Words of the Poet

Id. Syntag.  
1. p. 205.

Poet

Poet were spoken according to the Apprehension of Mankind, and that the Apostle only restores what was improperly said of *Demons*, and gives to God the things which belong to God, what Idolatry had sacrilegiously bestowed on Idols ?

*Aratus* was of *Cilicia*, the same Province with *St. Paul*, who therefore was not unacquainted with his Writings. He flourished in the time of *Philadelphus*, and wrote his *Phænomena* and *Diosemia*, both in such Esteem with learned Men, that *Cicero*, *Claudius*, and *Germanicus* translated them into *Latin*. He begins his *Phænomena* with the usual Invocation of the Poets, ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεθα, à *Jove principium*, and shortly after, τῆ γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν, *For we are his Offspring*.

If he had not been instructed from the *Jewish* Schools, he must speak these Words, either as they were generally understood, or else as an inspired Person ; the latter no one supposes, and on the former there cannot be a better Comment than what the inquisitive and learned *Diodorus Siculus* says, that it is generally believed, that all Men were originally his Offspring : Of *Jehovah* ? No ; but of *Jupiter* the *Cretan*, that infamous Adulterer and Idol of the Poets.

But whoever carefully reads the whole Passage of *Aratus*, will, I think, be of Opinion, that by *Jupiter* he means the Universe, the greatest God of the Ancients ; for immediately before he says, the Villages and Ways, the Markets, Harbours and Seas, are full of *Jupiter* ; and πάντα δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες, *We all of us make use of every part of Jupiter*. And *Theon*, in his *Scholias*, interprets that Hemistich even in a secondary Meaning, as spoken of the Air, which he calls τὸν Δία, or τὴ Ζῆνα τὴ φυσικὴν, *the Natural Jupiter*, in whom, in an inferior Sense, we may be said to live and move, and have our Being ; for without Air no Creature can subsist, it administering the

Vid. Cl.  
Alexand.  
Strom. 5.  
p. 597.

the most immediate Matter of Life unto them, by feeding and refreshing their animal Spirits. And *Theon* must be allowed as competent a Judge of the Poet's Meaning as any Modern. Nor is that Expression any more than the old Iambick, Ζῶμεν δ' ἐν αὐτῷ, κ' κινῶμεθα; or that of *Lucan*, *Jupiter est quodcumque vides, quocumque moveris*; the same as *Virg. Ecl. 3. Jovis omnia plena*. Which I imagine no one was ever so void of Reason, as to interpret of God that made Heaven and Earth.

Thus the Apostle first shews the *Athenians* where-in their Guilt of Superstition and Idolatry consisted. 2dly, He teaches them a new and proper Object of their Adorations; a God, but confessedly unknown to them, as distinguished by a more august Character than any of their Deities had assumed, *The Maker of all things*. And, 3dly, That some Expressions of their own Writers could be applicable to him only; for, as the Creator of Men, we are his Offspring; as their Preserver, *in him we live and move, and have our Being*.

I shall add to what has been already said (concerning *Innate Ideas*) on *Rom. ii. 14.* that *the Heathens not having a Law, are a Law unto themselves*, and other Texts of the same Import, that we must understand and explain them in a Sense agreeable to the *Hebrew* Acceptation, in which they were wrote. Now it is certain, that the Jews absolutely denied any Natural Law discoverable by the mere Light of Reason: And that in general (especially the *Pharisees*, who were the Doctors and Expounders of Religion, and of whom *St. Paul* was one) never intended by universal, common, unwritten, or natural Law, any more than the Commands given by God to the First Parents of Mankind, and by them transmitted to their Posterity, who were all equally under an Obligation to observe it, from the Authority of him that ordained them: These they supposed to be contained

Vid. Seld.  
de Jure  
Nat. &  
Gent. jux-  
ta Discip.  
Ebr. L. 1.  
c. 8.

tained in the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*, propagated through the several Dispersions of Mankind, and for ever continued a Law, or Rule of Life, to the Heathen World. And that they were no farther bound by the written Law of *Moses*, than as those unwritten ones were afterwards incorporated with it.

It was from the Observance of this Law, that *Noah* was found just, and *Abraham* became the Friend of God; of whom God says, *Gen. xviii. 19.* that *he shall command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.* This Way, the Doctrine, and the Law, which God had shewed to Men. And no other Interpretation can be given of those remarkable Words in *Job xxiii. 11, 12.* *My Foot hath held his Steps, his Way have I kept, and not declined, neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lip, and I have esteemed (or hid in my Breast) the Words of his Mouth.* But these were not immediately delivered by any Revelation, and therefore must refer to a former Declaration of the Divine Will, *viz.* to our First Parents, which was of perpetual and unalterable Obligation to the Sons of Men; and is what *Isaiah* applies to the Heathen, and calls, *xxiv. 5.* *the Law, the Obedience, the Everlasting Covenant.*

The *Jews*, in short, rejected any Natural Law, but what the God of Nature had declared; and ordained for the Direction of Men. And with them, Universal or Natural Law was the same as the Way, the Footsteps, the Words, the Dictates, and Commands of the Supreme Being.

But as the considering every particular Text, would run into too great a Prolixity, I shall only shew in general;

I. That the Scriptures do not attribute the Knowledge of the true God to the Heathens.

II. That



II. That they suppose them incapable of attaining or discovering such Knowledge.

III. That Men lost the Knowledge of God by their own vain Reasoning and Philosophizing.

*First*, That the Scriptures, &c. It must always be remembered, that through the whole Scripture the peculiar and distinguishing Character of the true God, is *Creation and Omnipotence*, which was never given to any other. The first Words of the Divine Historian are, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*. What the Heathens adore are but his Creatures. *For all the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens*. And again, *Among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, there is none that can do as thou dost*. And, *Thus saith the Lord God, He that created the Heavens, and stretched them out, he that spread forth the Earth, &c.* and then adds, *I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another, neither my Praise to graven Images*. And, *I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the Heavens by myself*. And *Jeremy*, *He that made the Earth by his Power, he hath established the World by his Wisdom, and hath stretched out the Heavens by his Discretion*. On which is grounded the Prophetick Denunciation against every undue Object of Divine Worship. *The Gods that have not made the Heavens and the Earth, even they shall perish from the Earth, and from under these Heavens*. And the *Wisdom of Solomon*, xii. 27. *They acknowledged him to be the true God, whom before they denied to know*.

And the first Christians, to discriminate their Faith from the *Gentiles*, professed to believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

Nor is there one Line that I know of through the Old Testament, whence it may be inferred, that the Heathens had a Knowledge of the true God, who  
is

is always put in direct Opposition to the Beings they worshipped, which were Devils, Demons, Deified Men, &c. Thus it is said, *They have sacrificed to Devils, not to God, to Gods whom they knew not. They have served Gods whom they knew not, neither they nor their Fathers.* David is full to this purpose, that in *Judah is God known, his Name is great in Israel.* But as for the Heathen, *they are such as have not known him, the Kingdoms that have not called upon his Name.* To know the Name of God, was the Mark of a true *Israelite*; To forget God, of the rest of the World.

So the Prophets: *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not upon thy Name.* Where the calling upon God is substituted for the whole Worship of him; but they acknowledged him not to be their God, and consequently never worshipped or prayed to him: *For they knew not their Maker, but counted all the Idols of the Heathen to be Gods; worshipped the Things they made, and the most hateful Beasts, so went without the Praise of God and his Blessing.*

*Isaiah* gives a full Attestation to this, in a Prophecy against *Egypt* (the great School of Wisdom and Idolatry) and the calling of it to the Church. *Their Princes were become Fools, and their wise Counsellors foolish.* They who pretended to be wise, and the Sons of ancient Kings, and prove their Descent from the Gods, many thousand Years before the Creation: Even these grossest of Idolaters, *shall then speak the Language of Canaan, and swear not to false Gods, but to the Lord of Hosts.* In that day shall there be an Altar to the Lord in the midst of the Land of *Egypt*; or they shall worship the true God, of which his Altar was the Monument and Witness; and the Lord shall be known to *Egypt*, and the *Egyptians* shall know the Lord. Can Words more clearly express their Ignorance of him; and how unprophe-

tical

tical would it be, to say they should some time know what they already knew?

In the New Testament our Saviour says to the Woman of Canaan, whom St. Mark calls a *Gentile* <sup>22.</sup> of *Syrophenicia*, i. e. a *Phenician* of *Tyre* or *Sidon*; *It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and to cast it to Dogs*; a Note of Reproach and Distinction betwixt them, and such as knew and acknowledged God to be their Father; which the Heathens did not.

Through all the Writings of the Apostles, Idolatry is the very Character of Gentilism. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away to dumb Idols, even as ye were led.* Which he thus explains: *In times past ye walked according to the Course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience*, i. e. the Devil, or the Power of Darkness. And as they were Servants to him whom they obeyed, they held Communion and Fellowship only with him. *Therefore the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, not to God.* They drank of the Cup of Devils, partook of their Table, and had Fellowship with them.

And for this reason St. Paul so often asserts, *that they were without God in the World*, in ἀθεότητι, a State of *Atheism*, in being ignorant of the true God. And, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Thinking even such things as had no Existence to be Gods; and on these accounts were ἀθεοί, *Atheists*, (the very Term which the Heathens reproached the Christians with, for not allowing those to be Gods whom they esteemed as such) and had no hope of spiritual or future Blessings.

So to the *Galatians*: *When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them, which by Nature are not Gods: but now after ye have known God, &c.* what is more manifest than that they knew him not before?

So

1 Theff.  
iv. 5.

So he warns the *Theſſalonians* not to walk in unnatural Crimes, as the *Gentiles* did which know not God, nor his Will, as looking upon thoſe Sins as innocent or indifferent.

So that through the whole Scripture there is ſcarce one Truth more plainly or frequently aſſerted, than that the Heathens were utterly ignorant of the true God.

II. That the Scriptures did not ſuppoſe the *Gentiles* capable of attaining or diſcovering ſuch Knowledge, is evidently to be inferred,

- First*, From the Characters under which they are conſtantly repreſented, which are purpoſely given to ſhew their Inability and Inſufficiency for it. By the
- If. ix. 2. Prophets in the Old Teſtament, *That Darkneſs ſhall cover the Earth, and a groſs Darkneſs the People.*
- If. ix. 2. Again, *The People that walked in Darkneſs, and they that dwell in the Land of the Shadow of Death,* which
- Job x. 21. *Job ſtiles the Grave, the Land of Darkneſs and the Shadow of Death*; which implies their being as dead Souls in the dark Grave of Sin, under a total Deprivation of ſpiritual Knowledge, Light, and Life.
- Wiſd. xv. 14. In the Book of *Wiſdom*, that *they are moſt fooliſh, more miſerable than the very Babes.*

All which Terms are directly applied to them in the New Teſtament. The Inhabitants of *Zabulon* and *Nephtali* are by our Saviour ſtilled a *People which ſat in darkneſs, in the Region and Shadow of Death*. This was *Galilee* of the *Gentiles*, being inhabited, ſays *Strabo*, by a mixt Swarm, *Egyptians*, *Arabians*, and *Phenicians*. *Joſephus* obſerves, that they are encompassed with many ſtrange, *i. e.* heathen Nations: And had continued in the darkeſt Ignorance of Duty and of God.

Acts xvii. 27. *St. Paul* abounds with theſe Expreſſions: *To ſeek after the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him.* A Task of the utmoſt difficulty, as Men blind or in the dark, put forth their Hands and feel,

left

lest they should fall into Danger, and try to find the way ; groping they know not where, and with the last Hazard and Uncertainty of Success, as the Phrase *Ἀλαφῆσιαν* clearly intimates.

He enumerates many of them together : *The blind, and those which are in darkness* ; not able to see, as foolish, void of all true Wisdom, and Babes, like Children before the Use of Reason, unable to distinguish Truth from Falshood. Rom. ii. 19.

He calls them, *By Nature the Children of Wrath and Disobedience, dead in Trespasses and Sins : Who walked in the Vanity of their Mind, having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts, and being past feeling did give themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness.* Eph. ii. 1, 3. Ib. iv. 17.

By these and many other like Expressions, is the dismal State of the Heathens every where declared in Scripture : That in their Minds they were blinded with the grossest Ignorance, and deluded with the foulest Errors ; in their Wills and Affections corrupted with the greatest Disorder and Sensuality ; in their Conversation they practised all sorts of Impiety, Iniquity, and Impurity ; their Conceptions of God were false and unworthy, and their Worship answerable to their Belief, full of sottish, savage, beastly Superstitions ; their Principles vain, and their Lives conformably dissolute. Even the few wise among them were full of Ignorance and Doubt with regard to the main Points of Religion, the Existence of God, a Providence, the spiritual Nature and future Subsistence of Souls.

So that the World was shut up *and concluded under Sin, Darkness, Weakness, and Death, and the whole Creation, all Mankind, groaned together and travelled until now.* And in the Scripture-Phrase and Language, it was as easy for the Blind to discern and Gal. iii. 22. Rom. viii. 22.

find things, for the Deaf to hear, for Infants to argue and reason, or for the Dead to arise and walk ; as for the Heathen, in the dark, corrupt, impotent State they were in, and which the unsearchable Providence of God permitted, to dive into, discern and know the *spiritual things which belong to God.*

*Secondly,* The Inability of the Heathens to attain the Knowledge of God, notwithstanding all the Aids of Reason and Nature, may, I think, be safely concluded from considering the Dealings of God with them : He is jealous of his Honour, he hates the Sins of Presumption, and is of purer Eyes than to behold or approve the least Iniquity.

Yet how often are they assured, that all their past Crimes and Abominations should never be laid to their Charge, if they would be converted to God by the preaching of the Gospel? *That God in time past suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways, to live after their own Opinions ; having sent neither Priest nor Prophet amongst them to reveal his Will, nor had afforded any extraordinary Means or supernatural Assistance, to bring them to a saving Knowledge of him : And how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher?*

Acts xiv.  
16.

Rom. x.  
14.

*Therefore the Times of this Ignorance God winked at, ὑπερίδων, overlooks, takes no notice of, passes them over in silence: But now, as having given those Means of Knowledge, which were denied before, commandeth all Men every where to repent ; which certainly implies a new Subject of Duty and Obedience. And if the Heathen either had a full Knowledge of God, as some affirm ; or with others, that they might, with the greatest Ease and Perspicuity, have learned him from the Book of Nature; the Characters of which are so plain and legible, that he who runs, even the way faring Man, those of the lowest*

lowest

lowest Understanding, may read, and be perfectly instructed; and yet no notice is taken of their wilful presumptuous Apostasy; of such loud and crying Sins, as called for Vengeance from Heaven: How is this reconcilable with infinite unerring Justice, that has no Respect of Persons, but giveth to every Man according to his Works? Would not the State of Paganism be much happier than that of the Gospel? Under which, *if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.* Heb. x. 26. Here Apostasy is unpardonable, because done with despite, wilful, obstinate, and malicious. And yet are not the Ways of God, and the Decrees of Divine Justice equal? If so, Why did not that clear Knowledge the Heathens had, or might with such ease have obtained; render their Idolatry the Object of inevitable Punishment? But if God will never wink at impenitent Sins in the Day of Knowledge, must we not conclude, that those horrid Impieties, which so pure a God would take no notice of, were committed in a Night of darkest Ignorance? What other Reason can be given for so merciful an Allowance of Impiety and Impurity?

When we consider these and many other Passages, it seems very difficult to imagine the *Gentiles* had, or could so easily come at the Knowledge of God, their Duty to him, or to one another, as many of the present Age are willing to grant them; if that were the Case, if they had a standing and unvariable Rule of acting, by which they were accountable, and in Equity might be judged; and if under such Circumstances, the Judge of the World (and shall not he do right?) winked at, and forgave them; surely their Condition was vastly preferable to the *Jews*, that

chosen Seed, whose Disobedience was so constantly and severely punished, beyond the Example of other Nations.

But from these Proceedings of the Almighty, we may infer some not unuseful Observations.

First, That the severe and uncharitable Censures which many have passed upon the *Gentile* World, of their being unavoidably condemned to everlasting Punishment, was founded on the Opinion of their enjoying, or what is the same thing, of having Capacities with the greatest ease to attain an exact Knowledge of God and their Duty : And upon this Supposition it would be unreasonable to determine otherwise. Such was the vain Opinion of the *Jews*,

Pirke Eli-  
ezer, c. 9.  
§ 4.

“ That all *Israel* shall have a Portion in the World to come ; but the Heathens are to be Fuel for Hell-fire.”

Secondly, That as God is the Author of Mens Beings, who created and intended all for Happiness, being of infinite Mercy as well as Justice ; he surely will require no stricter Account than according to the Talents he himself intrusts, and has committed to their Charge : So that Impossibilities can never be the Terms of Duty, nor shall a Man be condemned for what was not in his Power to avoid. But whoever justly uses those Helps and Abilities he has, in a careful Search and Obedience of Truth, though he miss of Truth, may be charitably hoped not to miss the Reward of it.

For this Reason, *Socrates*, though an Idolater, and superstitious in the Article of Death, yet if he was humble, sought for Truth with Diligence, and impartially chose what to him appeared best ; I shall not doubt but his Soul, and that of every honest Heathen, is happy, and will be blessed with the Vision of God : For if it were a Misery to be born in the Times of Paganism, it was not a Fault ; and tho’



the Light to direct them was never so dim, if they followed it with Humility and Sincerity, embraced nothing without a due and calm Examination, nor acted contrary to the Conviction of their Judgment, it would certainly direct them to Light eternal.

Wherever there is a Law, there must be an Obligation to Punishment; and when a Man does what he is persuaded he ought not to do, he is as obnoxious to Punishment as if the Law had been written in Tables of Brass. If he does what after the most serious Enquiry appears to him best, he acts agreeably to the Law of his Nature, *his Thoughts will excuse him*, and his Conscience *bear him witness*, that he is innocent, even *in the Day when God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ.* Rom. ii. 16.

One cannot indeed but be astonished, that the Majesty of the great God should be so utterly forgotten, and Man fall into that Stupidity, as to prefer dead Creatures to the Preserver of all things. And yet we see Pardon and Allowance may be made to it, if proceeding from invincible Ignorance. Vid. Lac-tant. p. 115.

Thirdly, We hence learn the Rules of God's proceeding in Judgment, that it is the willing a thing that makes it our own: The choosing and preferring one thing before another, knowing it to be in Instances of Duty or Sin, this constitutes the formal Good or Evil of an Action to us, and renders us accountable for it: And consequently as the Degrees of Revelation, and Means of Knowledge are more or less, so is a Person's Ignorance more or less excusable before God. The Case of the Heathens seems to be stated in those Words of our Saviour: *He that knew his Master's Will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes.* Luke xii. 47, 48. And this is grounded on the strictest Equity, *That unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required, &c.* Where therefore the Er-

ror is involuntary, and the Ignorance morally invincible, that after the most diligent Search after Truth Men are not able to find it; we cannot but hope that a merciful God will weigh these Circumstances, and make Allowances for the Infirmities of his Creatures; and that the Heathens, if serious in finding out Truth, and impartial in choosing what appeared to be the best, will not, we trust, find that gracious Being they have to deal with, severe to mark all that is done amiss, nor eternally condemn them, for not doing what they could not know to be their Duty: But the honest *Gentiles* shall receive a Reward, when their Sun shall set, and Night put an End to their Labours. *For many shall come from the East, and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven: But the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer Darknes.*

Mat. viii.  
11.

We need not here dispute about their Degrees of Happiness, if it be allowed that they shall not be utterly deprived of Reward for want of an impossible Condition. There may be different Mansions, and the blessed differ from one another, as the Stars in Glory; yet in the everlasting Sabbath of Rest and Felicity, every one will be happy to their utmost Capacities and Wishes.

The Sum is, That according to the Degrees of Knowledge which God has afforded, so shall Mens Crimes receive Aggravation of Guilt and Increase of Punishment; and the more Light and Grace he bestows on any, the more and better Performances will he require of them.

*Thirdly*, The Scriptures attribute the Depravation and Loss of Divine Knowledge to Mens own Reasonings and Philosophizings upon it.

This is laid down as a sure unerring Rule to guide our Thoughts by, that the Things of God are not known but by the Spirit of God: *Because the Natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,*  
for

1 Cor. ii.  
11, 12.

for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know <sup>Ib. ver.</sup> them, because they are spiritually discerned. The Apo- <sup>14.</sup>stle affirms he cannot know them; and the Reason must be, that all Parts of Divine Wisdom are too transcendent for natural Light, even in those of the most elevated Endowments, perfectly to contemplate or apprehend; there being a spiritual Dark-ness both in the Things to be known, and the Faculty that is to receive them, which cannot be taken away but by God, in manifesting the thing to be known, and taking off the Vail from the Mind, thereby enabling it to apprehend supernatural Objects; both which are included in Revelation, which is an immediate Act and Communication of God. And for Nature to find out supernatural things, is to act above Nature, or an Impossibility.

The same is true of the Angelic World: Their Glory and Excellence is only owing to a nearer Contemplation of the Infinite Beauties of the Divine Essence. But this is owing to the Will of God, whose Ministers they are, and not to any Necessity of his Nature or theirs, being absolutely dependent on his omnipotent Will.

This St. Peter illustrates: *He that wanteth these* <sup>2 Pet. 1. 9.</sup> *things* (those Graces of God mentioned in the preceding Verses) *is blind, and cannot see afar off.* The moment the Divine Assistance is withdrawn, we are unable to seek for, consider, or understand them, the whole Procedure of Divine Knowledge being under his Guidance, Influence, and Direction; and when once that forsakes us, or we that, we become blind in the Discernment of Things, and our Reasonings about them.

This was the Case of the World, God manifested himself to them, and they might, through a due Contemplation of his Works, have been fully convinced of his invisible Perfections. But they no sooner began to speculate about Nature, and account

for Things by their own Reason, but they departed from true Wisdom, grew *vain in their Imaginations*, wholly attended to visible Objects, and gradually forgot the Maker of them; till at last, though *professing themselves wise, they became Fools*, so stupid and brutal as to *worship the Creature more than the Creator*.

- Col. ii 8. *They spoiled the noblest Truths through Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men; debased themselves with their own Inventions, converted what they did not thoroughly understand, into Fable and Mythology, and so turned the Truth of God into a Lye, which all the Labour and Study of their wise Men could never rectify; but became the Ground of perpetual and inexplicable Diffensions among them. This was after the Rudiments of the World, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα, according to the Elements and Principles of natural Reason and Philosophy, both which were false and imperfect.*

Wherefore, ver. 18. *He would have them dead to the Rudiments of the World*, those human Institutions which had depraved Revelation, and were wholly vain and useless to the great End of Man, the Knowledge and Enjoyment of God. For, ver. 22. *they are only the Commandments and Doctrines of Men*, a broken and corrupt System, and abused to Pride, Vanity, and Idolatry. For even this outside Knowledge; ver. 18. *vainly puffed up their fleshly Mind* (the same Expression is repeated 1 Cor. iv. 6, 18, 19.) all their speculative Knowledge was inflated and empty, filled with Arrogance and Presumption, and was no more than a conceited Ignorance, as void of all that only useful Knowledge which tends to the Salvation of ourselves and others; a Contemplation of trifling and unprofitable Things, thin and aerial Speculations, without any mixture of true and solid Science; *but was a Science falsely so called*, 1 Tim. vi. 20. *consisting chiefly in foolish and*

and unlearned Questions, which served only to gender Strife, 2 Tim. ii. 23. and no way conducive to the Improvement or End of Man.

To shew the Vanity of all which artificial Learning, the Apostle, 1 Cor. i. 20. asks, *Where is the Disputer of this World?* the contentious Litigator, or Striver about Words; or συζητήης, *the Searcher or Enquirer into the Nature of Things?* Their Philosophy becoming the Subject of infinite Questions, Cavils, and Controversies; when it follows, *Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World?* ἐμώραρον, *so as to appear frantick and mad,* in that they could not find out the Truth, which ought to be the End of all philosophical Studies and Enquiries: As if he had said, Hath not God made all those pompous Contemplations of the proud Philosophers (who with such Labour have pried into the Bowels of Nature for hidden Philosophy) appear to be foolish and vain? In that they have not yet by all their acute Researches and Inquisitions attained to any true Notion and Discovery of the first Principle, the God of Nature, which is the chief End of all Philosophy: *For after that in the Wisdom of God, in the Works of Creation and Providence, the World by Wisdom knew not God;* those blind Studiers of Nature could not read those legible Characters, nor attain any true Notion, nor bring themselves to any serious reverential Acknowledgment of him; which was an evident Demonstration of the Madness and Folly of all their Wisdom; as not being able to reach its first Principle or last End; notwithstanding the various Manifestations of a God, they only groped about Nature (as *Seneca's* blind Fool did about his House, complaining the Rooms were dark) without being able to find the Author of it.

The Apostle therefore, to convince the World of the extreme Vanity of all their boasted Wisdom,  
and

and its Inability from all their Contemplations to attain the Knowledge of God, adds, *That it hath pleased God, by the Foolishness of Preaching, viz. the Gospel, which unto the Greeks was Foolishness, ver. 23. and by the foolish Things of this World, the uneducated and illiterate Preachers, to confound the Wise, all the Labours and Contemplations of Philosophy, to expose its Weakness and Wickedness, confound their Arguments and Demonstrations, answer all Gainsayers, and in an Instant fully to describe and explain the greatest of all Subjects; the Existence, Nature and Providence of a Supreme Being; which all the Force of Nature, the internal Endowments of the Mind, the Strength of Reason improved with the utmost Acquisitions of Wisdom, from the laborious Study of Nature and Advancements in Philosophy, through the Course of so many Ages could not attain the least Certainty or Knowledge of, viz. a true Notion of God, what he was, or where to be found.*

Colof. ii:  
2, 8.

On these Accounts the Apostle so vehemently and frequently repeats that Warning to his Disciples: *To beware lest any Man should beguile them through enticing Words, and spoil them through Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men:* Which in times past had corrupted, instead of repaired their common Notions of Theology, was the Means of more effectually intangling them in Superstition and Idolatry; and what he Prophetically foresaw would be the Source of all the monstrous Corruptions that should infect the pure Doctrine of the Gospel.

He especially guards them against, (ver. 18, 23.) *that Shew of Wisdom, in Will-worship and Humility, viz. of Demons, which was in an especial Manner the Religion of Philosophers (as distinguished from the fabulous and political) who, from their Misunderstanding or Stupidity, had perverted this great Doctrine,*

trine, and established an Order of Beings, the *Phœnician Baalim*, the *Greek Demons*, but Scripture Devils, to be Mediators betwixt them and the heavenly Gods, and became direct Objects of their Worship.

He gives to *Timothy* a just Summary of Human and Heathen Learning, *That it is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Questions, and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmising, perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds, and destitute of the Truth; and therefore bids him put them in remembrance, with a Note of most solemn Adjuration, charging them before the Lord, not to strive about Words (as was the Custom of vain Philosophers) to no Profit, but to the perverting of the Hearers. To shun profane and vain babblings, i. e. says Grotius, "The Inventions and Comments of Men " on divine Matters, without any Revelation," for they will increase unto more ungodliness, to the introducing of Error, Heresy, and every Abomination; And their Words will eat as doth a Canker, the venomous Influence of Philosophy will spread like a Gangrene over the sound Parts of Christianity. Therefore again he urges, ver. 23. Foolish and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that they do gender Strifes; they had proved the Ruin of Philosophy, and the Corruption of Religion.*

All these Cautions the Spirit of God foresaw were necessary, to prohibit the least mixture of worldly Wisdom with the Doctrines of Faith; nevertheless the fatal Effects thereof soon appeared in the *Gnosticks*, or Men pretending to extraordinary Knowledge, "Who, says Dr. Hammond, "abounded with an empty frothy Wisdom, taken out of the *Pythagorean Philosophy*:" And made Christianity a mythologick fabulous System, filling it, in Imitation of the Heathens, with the Generation of the Gods, an infinite Number of *Æons*, Images, Ideas, Emanations, Angelick Powers,

ers, Middle and Mediator Gods, answerable to the *Pagan Demons*, and to which *Grotius* applies those *διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων*, the *Doctrines of Devils*, in 1 Tim. iv. 1. And in this principally followed the *Pythagoreans*, who gave heed to seducing Spirits, had Commerce with them, were Magicians, as *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and taught their Doctrines, being thoroughly superstitious, in fixing the Order and Worship of Demons, external Washings and Purifications for the Expiation of Sin, &c.

And to mention no more, from the Vanity of Philosophy, which asserted a Power in Man to perform all virtuous Actions, sprang up Pelagianism, which confidently advanced the Possibility of attaining a State of Perfection and Impeccability; and thus made corrupt Nature independent of God, his Assistance, or Grace: And I wish it be not the same Pride, which in this Age exalts Nature and Reason to such excessive Height, as to teach, that it is in the Power of Man, through a due Exercise of his Faculties, to discover what is necessary to his Perfection both in this World and the other; and consequently that he stands in no need of Revelation.

This unnatural Exaltation of Reason has always proved the Bane and Curse of it; and whoever pretends to derive, or account for Religion on those Principles, will soon lose the Christian in the vain Philosopher.

But I hope it fully appears, that in Scripture there is no Foundation for such Pretences, on which nevertheless the whole System of Natural Religion is built: But by what means this Law or Religion of Nature, they say, may be attained, shall be the Subject of the next Enquiry.

The *Second* Argument offered in Support of Natural Religion, is, from the Contemplation of the Works of God.



The Maintainers of the Law of Nature affirm, that Man by the due Use of his Reason, and without the Help of Revelation, may discover what is necessary to be known or done, *i. e.* the Knowledge of God, of their Duty to him, themselves, and one another; from a due Observation of, and proper Inferences from the Grandeur, Beauty, and Order of the Universe.

To guide our Judgment in a Point of such Importance, it will be necessary to consider whether both the Instrument and Means be sufficient for the Purposes assigned to them, since from a Failure in either of these, the whole Superstructure must fall to the Ground.

The Instrument is the Faculty of Reason; and the Means are those Collections and Inferences it may make from a serious Contemplation of created Beings, Man's own Frame, and that Relation and Fitness, which so evidently appear in the Series, Order, and Dependence of Things.

Now to make a just Estimate of Reason, we cannot take the Standard of it from the State of Innocence, when the Judgment was clear, and there were no inordinate Passions to bias it; nor in this corrupt State of Nature, from any two or three Persons who may have appeared in the Space of so many thousand Years; nor, as has been before observed, from any Treatises of Morality since the Revelation of the Gospel: But from the Bulk of Mankind, from more Millions, than there have been single Philosophers in the World; because this is Nature which is regular in its Actings; and if the same Causes sometimes produce surprising, extraordinary, or different Effects, we say there is something preternatural in it, or that Nature had acted beyond, and above its usual Course.

It is thus in Vegetable and Animal Productions, and the same Rule will hold also in the Rational:

What

What the present Age is in its Intellectual Powers, such was the last, and such will the succeeding be. There is no Inconstancy, Variation, or Change therein: Times, and Seasons, and Men are still the same, without any Tendency to further Imperfection or Decay. Whatever Difference there has been in several Ages, it was owing to some external Circumstances, not to Nature. When Application to Knowledge prevailed, the Abilities of the Mind proportionably rose; when discontinued, Ignorance and Barbarity spread themselves over the World; yet the Faculties were the same, and the Difference owing to Culture, not to Nature.

And since infinite Power, and the most benign Wisdom were the Contrivers of Nature, we must suppose they made a suitable Provision of all things necessary to the respective Condition of their Creatures: Therefore in Man, if there be a Duty required of him, he must have the Means of knowing and apprehending it, or there can be no Law to him; nor he be an accountable Creature, but under a natural Incapacity of answering the End and Purposes of his Being; under Obligation to Obedience, yet the Power and Means of obeying withheld by the Decree of his Maker, which surely is an Imputation not to be cast on Divine Justice and Mercy.

Therefore, if every Person of a mature Age (without any natural Imperfection) in all Times and Places have not sufficient Abilities clearly to know his Duty, and attain the perfective End of his Being; it must follow, that the Author of Nature, in not granting such Abilities, does not require that Man should come at the Knowledge of Duty by this Means; because he cannot demand Impossibilities of his Creatures, nor will suffer them to perish eternally without any Default of their own.

On the other hand, if this be the appointed Means of Knowledge, and Divine Truths are so obvious, that every Person has a natural Sagacity from sensible Observations and internal Reflexions, plainly to discover them, these Conclusions must necessarily be granted.

*First,* That every humble attentive Mind may infallibly do it; because otherwise he would have Powers and Apprehensions to no purpose; the not having a thing, and not knowing that we have it, or Abilities to use it, being much the same.

*Secondly,* All these Truths would be equally plain and evident to every Understanding: For where Nature is alike, so will be its Operations; and as the same Object, from one Point of Sight, and through a proper Medium, appears to the natural Eye of different Persons in the same Magnitude, Colour, Form, &c. and Sounds make a like Impression on the Ear: So will Truths naturally investigable, be discerned with the same Evidence and Certainty by the Mind; for where the thing is apprehended, and the manner of apprehending through similar Organs or Faculties is the same, there will be no Difference in Opinion, no Uncertainty, or Contradiction about it.

*Thirdly,* If the same Duties oblige the whole Nature, they must be equally discoverable by every Individual which partakes of that Nature, the illiterate as well as the Philosopher, in the Sheep-fold or Wilderness, as well as in the College; among the savage *Indians*, as in *Rome*, or *Athens*; or Mercy would be unequal, and Millions would be destitute of Means to attain the End for which all were purposely created. But all Souls are equal, and every Creature of God perfect in its Kind; and no Mortal dare to say, that infinite Wisdom could not, or essential Goodness would not furnish them with Powers sufficient to attain their End; and as the knowing  
and

and serving God is the End of Man; if Reason be the Means intended to work out the End; every Man must have sufficient Abilities to do it, or the Work of God will be imperfect.

Now if there had been but a few from whom these Truths were hid, it might be imputed to particular Sloth or Imbecillity. But when there are but a few (two or three, says Dr. *Clarke*) to whom they were known; what can be inferred but that this Knowledge was not from Nature, but some other Means?

And if Laws are attended with Rewards and Punishments, in which their Force consists, since that from which we have neither Hopes nor Fears, is absolutely indifferent to us, and a few only can know or obey those Laws, but the Multitude be incapable of it: Then, by Virtue of such Laws, one or two may be rewarded, but Millions of otherwise innocent but unhappy Souls, be finally condemned, having neither Means nor Opportunity of doing otherwise: Surely this is not a Law, but a rigid inexorable Decree; and if Man is to be eternally doomed by these Rules; if Omnipotence made Creatures on purpose to be miserable, whither is Mercy flown, or where do Righteousness and Justice dwell?

Or if the Law be only such as it is discovered or apprehended, and the Obligation extend no further, then the Discovery will make the Law, and that be infinitely various as the Capacities of Mankind are; in common to all, yet not common or alike with any; to some a whole Law, to others in part; Universal, but not including Particulars; have Force to Day, and none To-morrow; compel here, and be abrogated there; in one Place shine, in another be extinguished. A Camelion that changes its Colour, and is contradictory to its self, as Circumstances happen, in a thousand Shapes and Instances  
(which

(which is the true Picture of Natural Religion thro' the whole Pagan World) and for these Reasons can be no Law, but a vague unintelligible thing, without Force or Obligation.

Again, If the Discovery or Apprehension make the Law, every Man must have a right to judge for himself, according to such Discovery or Apprehension, and consequently to act, or not to act, so far as he has formed his Judgment, without being controlled by any other. For where one by Nature is a Judge, he may determine for himself, without submitting to any external Authority or Instruction. He is to be guided by his own Reasons, and those only so far as they are perceived and evident to his Mind, for which he neither is, nor can be accountable, but exists in a mere State of Nature and Liberty, free, and independent of every other Being.

As then Nature, and its common way of acting, is the same, what is affirmed of it must hold universally; and let the Definition of a Man be what it will, it must be equally true of all, *Quaecunque est Cic. Leg. hominis definitio, una in omnes valet.* So if natural Theology is rightly defined, to be that which is attainable by the Light of Nature only, then all who have the Light of Nature, and the Use of Reason, are capable of attaining it; otherwise the Definition will be false and imperfect.

Let us then only look abroad, and judge whether any of these things be applicable to Nature; we shall find the World as full of Savages now, as in the early Ages: And that could nine Parts in ten of the Inhabitants of the Earth be brought together, not one perhaps would have a tolerable Notion of a Divine Being, the Soul's Immortality, or a future State. It is possible they may have the Name of some things, but be absolutely ignorant of the Nature of them; for to know a  
T thing,

thing, is to understand its essential Properties, that which constitutes it, what it is, and distinguishes it from all others; to call a thing a Clock, and yet not know it has Wheels, Weights, Springs, or Motion, or that it divides the Time, is the Skill of a Parrot, not the Reason of a Man. Yet no better Account can the *Africans* or *Americans* give of Divine Truths. They have no Apprehensions of them, of the Perfections necessary to a self-existing Being; what Duty is agreeable to him, or what Rewards or Punishments await us in a future State.

Nay, we may venture to take the Standard of human Reason, even from Christians who enjoy so many greater Advantages than others do. Go into the Woods or Mines, and you will find Cannibals and Hottentots there. Examine and try the Commonalty in almost every Place, and you must observe how hebetate and dull they are, how strangely unacquainted with what they profess to believe, can give no rational Account of those very Articles of Faith which perhaps they can repeat; have such uncouth Ideas as are not only the Reproach, but the subverting of Religion, and literally fulfil the

Heb. v.  
12.

*Apostle's Words, That they have need that one teach them again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God, have need of Milk and not strong Meat: Are Babes and Children, so far from being acquainted with the Elements of Religion, that they*

Lock. Ess.  
L. 1. c. 4.  
§. 16. P.  
33.

are ignorant of the most common Truths. "Talk  
" but with the Country People, almost of any  
" Age, or young People almost of any Condition,  
" and you shall find that though the Name of  
" God be frequently in their Mouths, yet the  
" Notions they apply this Name to, are so odd,  
" low, and pitiful, that no body can imagine they  
" were taught by a rational Man."

Many

Many have natural Wit and Aptness to discharge their own mean Employments, yet take them out of that beaten Track, and you will find them ignorant of most Truths, doubtful of all, and able to account for none; So far from discovering Truth, that they cannot apprehend the Arguments whereby alone it could be discovered or proved. Put into their Hands any one Demonstration of the Existence of God, his Nature, or Providence; will they understand the Procedure, or discern the Connexion of the Premises? The Proposition they so far know, as to repeat it, because they have been taught it, but are incapable of perceiving its Evidence, or drawing Conclusions from it: And to affirm that the Law of Nature may be demonstrated by the strictest Rules of reasoning, yet that the World neither can do it, nor understand it when done, is saying little to the purpose. But this general Character of Man will hold true, that he is without Knowledge till he receive Instruction, without Conscience, till informed what the Will of God is.

Nor is this any Degradation of Man, it is his Nature, what all Ages of the World bear witness to and confirm. *Socrates* said of the Commonalty, Crito, p. 51.  
 “ They do every thing by Chance, without Counsel  
 “ or Design : And to *Charmidas*, he calls even the Xenoph. Mem. 1. 3.  
 “ Assemblies at *Athens* Fools, ignorant, and stupid.”  
*Plato* calls it “ A thing agreed upon, that the Mul- Politic. p. 300.  
 “ titude are no way able to receive Art or In-  
 “ struction.” And again, “ That the Vulgar are Repub. 6.  
 “ not capable of Philosophy, *i. e.* of Religion, in p. 494.  
 “ the Knowledge or Means of it.” And *Aristotle*,  
 “ That they prefer the Life of Beasts to any Ethic. 1.  
 “ other.” 1. c. 5.  
*Cicero* abounds with these Complaints, “ That Epist. fam. 1. 9.  
 “ every Place is full of Fools, *Stultorum omnia plena.*  
 “ That amongst the common People there is nei- 22.

- “ther Industry, nor Discernment, nor Reason, nor  
 “Wisdom; they judge of most Things by Opi-  
 “nion, of very few by Truth. *Non est consilium in*  
 ProPlanco. “*vulgo, non ratio, non discrimen, non diligentia. Ex*  
 Pro Roscio “*opinionem plurimam, ex veritate paucam judicat. Sic est*  
 Comædo. “*vulgus, ex veritate pauca, ex opinione multa æsti-*  
 p. 206. “*mat.*” “That Virtue or Knowledge is seldom  
 “to be met with in dull heavy Minds; *Tardis*  
 Tusc. Q. “*enim mentibus virtus non facile comitatur.* That  
 l. 5. n. 24. “Philosophy must be content with a few Judges,  
 Id. l. 2. “industriously avoiding the Multitude, being mis-  
 n. 1. “trusted and hated by them.” And in his Of-  
 L. 2. c. 2. “fices, when he treats of Wisdom, or the Science  
 “of Things divine and human, and their Causes, he  
 “says, “His Countrymen were little acquainted with  
 “such things, though so highly deserving of their  
 “Knowledge; *Nec satis erant nota nostris, & erant*  
 “*cognitione dignissima.* But Wisdom shuns the  
 “Crowd, *abhorre à multitudine Philosophiam.*  
 Nat. D. l. “And with Justice he observes, that if the World  
 1. n. 9. “was made for the wise, it was made for a very  
 Divin l. “few: If a Prodigy is what seldom happens, a  
 2. n. 28. “wise Man is one, and Mules have oftner foaled  
 “than there have been wise Men in the World.  
 Epist. 29. Seneca says, “*Nunquam volui populo placere; nam*  
 “*quæ ego scio, non probat: Quæ probat populus, ego*  
 “*nescio.* I never desire to please the People, for  
 “they do not approve what I know, and I don’t  
 “know what they approve.” So of many it be-  
 came Proverbial,

*Bæotum crasso jurares aere natum.*

- St. Aug. The elder Christians said the same, and called  
 de Morib. them “*Turbas imperitorum*, a rude ignorant Mob,  
 Eccles. “who are superstitious even in the true Reli-  
 Catholic. “gion.” They have scarce the Freedom of Rea-  
 1. 34. son, having no Criterion or Rule to judge of Truth  
 or Falshood by; are therefore Slaves to the Opi-  
 nions,



nions, and their Creed hangs upon the Lips of others; are carried with the Stream, and can give no Account of their Persuasion, but that others embrace it, without considering whether it be Dream or Demonstration. Call them Rational, yet they are the Tools of another's Reason, not their own: For though Reason be an Instrument in the Hands of Nature and of God, yet without long forming, without Principles, Method and Order to work by, it is a most fluctuating giddy thing, and seldom produces any thing that is great or praise-worthy; it is Instruction only that gives it an Edge, and fits it for the proper Uses of an intelligent Creature.

On these Accounts *Laſtantiuſ* and others very Laſtant. justly argued, “ That if what they call Philosophy l. 3. §. 25. cannot be attained but by learned Men; if it shuns P. 290. the common Society of Mankind, it cannot be Wisdom, nor the Way to it; if true Wisdom be essentially necessary to the Well-doing and End of Man, it cannot be confined to a Beard, a Cloke, or the Schools, but must indiscriminately be divided among all. Every rational Creature, of whatever Nation, Language, or Sex they be, will be capable of it: And if they cannot attain it by their own Mother-wit, the Author of Nature never could intend they should do it; or they have natural Capacities to no purpose.”

There is no other Rule to judge of the Powers of Nature, but general Experience and Observation: For every Creature is perfect in its kind; the Tree grows to its allotted Proportion, the Reptile, and Inhabitants of every Element, have all the requisite Means to fulfil the Ends of their Being, as well as Bounds set them, beyond which they cannot pass. Let the same Observation regulate our Thoughts with regard to Man; and we shall soon be convinced, that these things are out of his reach,

what Nature has denied him Powers or Faculties to attain.

Hooker Ec. Pol. l. 5. §. 68. p. 241. Id. §. 76. p. 264. L. 1 §. 12. p. 74.

And whatever Stress the learned Maintainers of Natural Religion lay upon the common Abilities and Reason of Mankind; yet when they take a serious View of them, they are forced to speak as I do, and complain how dull, how heavy, how almost without Sense the common Multitude every where is: That they who are sunk with Beggary, or Dejection, or Baseness, do not easily give ear to Reason; and that of those things which are needful for the Direction of all Parts of our Life, and not impossible to be discerned by the Light of Nature, are there not many, which few Mens natural Capacity, and some which no Man's hath been able to find out?

Tillotson, vol. 2. Sermon. 4. p. 32.

That grown Persons of a very low and mean Capacity of Understanding; and who either by reason of the Weakness of their Faculties, or other Disadvantages which they lie under, are in little or no Probability of improving themselves, are always to be considered in the Condition of Children and Learners; and therefore must of necessity, in things which are not plain and obvious to the meanest Capacities, trust to and rely upon the Judgment of others.

Dr. Clarke Disc. vol. 2. p. 155.

That the Necessity and Indispensableness of the great and moral Obligations of Natural Religion, as also the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, very few are able in reality and effect to discover clearly and plainly for themselves: But Men have great need of particular Teaching and much Instruction, to convince them of the Truth, Certainty, and Importance of these things.

Lock. Eff. l. 3. c. 6. §. 12. p. 262.

There are some Brutes which seem to have as much Knowledge and Reason as some that are called Men; and the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms are so nearly joined, that if you will take the lowest of the one, and the highest of the other, there will scarcely be perceived any great difference between them.

And

And that great Philosopher Dr. *More*: That the Vulgar cannot have any tolerable Conceit of an Omnipotent, Invisible, Immaterial Being; and only under an human Shape; which is the same that *Cicero* affirms. Cabbala, p. 62. Nat. D. l. 2. n. 17.

Here is an impartial Declaration from the wisest among us: Let us then grant it, and only consider what Steps such Men could take to investigate heavenly Wisdom; to pursue it through Paths utterly unknown, to ransack the vast Abyss of Nature, and unfold the Causes, Relations, and Dependencies of Things, to unveil her Secrets, and behold the wonderful Harmony and unshaken Steadiness whereby she acts, and discover Truths in the dark Shades wherein she conceals herself, and by a piercing Discernment separate it from Falshood: In short, by a clear and solid Understanding, to follow the Powers of Nature through all her Mazes, up to the first Spring and original Cause, and remove the thick Clouds betwixt him and Eternity: This surely is a Task (by their own Confession) utterly inconceivable, altogether impossible.

How can they, who by a kind of Necessity, from the constant Labour of the Body, have the Mind bowed down and chained to the Earth; have neither Capacity nor Attention; know not how to expend Labour in searching after Truth, nor Care in weighing Arguments, nor Diligence in observing Things.—*Thucydides* makes it a general Observation on human Nature: That in the Search of Truth most Men are impatient of Labour, and soonest embrace the Things that are next at hand. How can such who have no Skill or Art to account for the least thing they see or hear, so easily find out the most sublime and glorious ones that can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive? and what no Wisdom upon Earth has been able to explain further than they were revealed to us. Barrow, vol. 3. p. 321. L. 1. p. 9.

Lock. vid.  
Eff. l. 1.  
c. 4. §. 22.  
P. 37.

But the most Ignorant, when once instructed in these Points, will immediately see so much Truth and Reasonableness in them, that they cannot withhold their Assent; as on the other hand, without such Information, they would live and die without any Notion even of the Being of a Deity: And if such, with an honest Heart, an humble and teachable Mind, receive Instruction, believe, and obey, they will never want speculative Knowledge enough to save their Souls.

If we take a Survey of the elder Times, it will illustrate and confirm this. We shall find it was the Work of Ages to bring any Science to a tolerable Perfection; that the most extraordinary Genius's spent their whole Lives in unwearied Diligence and Travels, yet never attained true Wisdom. *Pythagoras*, till the fiftieth Year of his Age, was a Scholar under the greatest Masters in the World. *Democritus* spent no less than fourscore Years in hard Study. *Plato* attended the Lectures of *Socrates*, *Archytas*, and *Eurytas*, for forty Years; and *Aristotle* laboured more than twenty under *Plato*. Here were Persons of the most solid Judgment and vast Capacity, with invincible Study and Application, and assisted with the Labours of all preceding Ages, yet fell infinitely short of Truth.

Aristot. 7.  
Polit. c.  
15.

De Orat.  
l. 2. in fin.

What then can others of a weaker Mind and slighter Practice, without any Assistance or Guide, do, from the utmost Efforts of their natural Speculations? It is an Observation almost as old as Learning, that in the common Labours of Life a Man stands in need of Strength and Patience, but in Philosophy of much Leisure. And *Cicero* notes it as a Remark he always made, That no one ever became eminent in Eloquence or Wisdom, without the utmost Study and Application. *Semper statui neminem sapientiæ laudem & eloquentiæ sine summo studio & labore*

*bore & doctrina consequi posse.* And whoever tries, will find the Labours of the Mind to be greater and more fatiguing than those of the Body. *Multo majora sunt opera animi quam corporis.*

Cic. de  
Offic. l. 2.

Are not the Schools and Universities constant Witnesses of this? How unintelligible things at first are, what Time and Pains are consumed to enforce a Language or two; to teach the Art of Reasoning; to open a few Paths or Inlets to real and substantial Wisdom; yet notwithstanding all this Apparatus, how few attain it, the World will judge.

But we must observe the widest Difference between the Procedure in Natural and Divine Subjects. In human Studies every Advancement pleases; and tho' we are not able to trace out all the Relations and Dependencies of things, or at once perceive the full Evidence of what we are contemplating; yet the Mind is easy, under no Anxiety or Despair. It may grasp at more, yet is under no real Dejection for what it continues ignorant of, as being no way essential to its final End and Good.

But in Matters of Duty, and of great Concernment, it is far otherwise: If the Mind have not a plain and direct Assurance of what Law obliges it, it must labour under Doubts and Fears of eternally miscarrying: For whatever we do not know with Certainty, can be no more than a probable Opinion, which carries neither Evidence nor Obligation with it, nor can afford any Acquiescence or Satisfaction to the Mind. Here is no room for unadvised Rashness, or ill-grounded Opinion. To be deceived is to be undone; and there cannot be greater Folly or Arrogance, than for Man to refuse an omniscient Guide, and assume to himself what by the Law of his Nature he is incapable of.

Vid. Laet.  
l. 3. §. 13.  
p. 248.

Here we must reduce Things to their first Principles, and by the strictest Forms of Argumentation, shew how they are connected together, what the Truth

Truth of each Proposition concludes, and by what Means a moral Evidence and Obligation arises from them. If this be not the Case, why are all Systems of Natural Religion forced to submit to these Proofs, as the only Means to explain and establish them; if they can be otherwise illustrated, why is it not done? If they cannot, I do not see how such Religion can be called Natural, that wants Proofs of that Nature, which none but they who are conversant in the Depths of Philosophy can comprehend.

And if such be the miserable Lot of Man, that he can only know his Duty by Metaphysics, Mathematicks, Abstractions, and Illations, better he had never been born: If the Way to Life be so narrow, how few indeed would find it? Or if Duty be only discoverable by the Knowing, and without Knowledge there be no Obligation, the more unhappy must the Wise be, in bringing greater Restraints upon themselves, for which the Ignorant are not accountable.

Dr. Middleton's  
life of Cic.  
v. 3. p.  
357.

There is not an Author of note that ever mentions this Subject, to whose Words I might not leave the Decision of it. A late polite Writer agrees; That tho' the Natural Law in the Perfection to which it was carried by *Cicero*, might serve for a sufficient Guide to the few, such as himself, of enlarged Minds and happy Dispositions; yet had it been so long depraved and adulterated by the prevailing Errors, and Vices of Mankind, that it was not discoverable even to those few, without great Pains and Study; and could not produce in them at last any Thing more than a Hope, never a full Persuasion; whilst the greatest Part of Mankind, even of the Virtuous and Inquisitive, lived without the Knowledge of a God, or the Expectation of a Futurity; and the Multitude in every Country was left to the gross Idolatry of the popular Worship.

The

The Conclusion therefore will be just; That if the Law of Nature be what is discoverable by the Light of Reason only, and the infinitely greater Part of reasonable Creatures be unable to discern it; nay even the Virtuous and Inquisitive, to discover the very Foundation of it, the Knowledge of a God; This cannot be the Means appointed by the Author of Nature to come at the Law of our Beings; there necessarily must be some other. Nor is it solving the Difficulty, to say, That some Individuals may be able to do it, and communicate it to others; for it is contrary to the Definition as well as to Truth; there being whole Nations and Continents, without any such Teacher or Master ever among them; therefore God never intended it, nor requires it of them: Nor if there were, could they have any Right to demand their Assent or Obedience, nor others under Obligation to give it, without the Evidence of a superior Authority.

But let us allow, that though the common Herd be unequal to this Task; yet the Wise of the World, some few enlarged Minds, possibly might discover these Truths, and be Evangelists to the rest of Mankind: This will not mend the Matter, because they never could (in such Case) impose them as a Law to others; and that the Question will still return, whether even they were able to do it.

Ask the wisest of Men, and they will confess the Weakness of Reason, that after all its Attainments it falls infinitely short of Perfection, and is far from being commensurate to Truth or the Nature of Things: That the greater Insight they have, the more clearly they perceive a Want of farther Light to discover all their hidden Beauties. The deeper their Penetration is into what they already know, the more are they at a loss to account for what they do not know; and what the most Discerning know more than others, is this, That a thousand

thousand Things are above their Reach, which they are, and must be content to remain ignorant of.

Men indeed desire Truth and Knowledge, but they are not to be had at a cheap rate, not without Labour, and Watching, and painful Study. As they who do not penetrate Things to the Bottom, only raise Doubts, and fill themselves with Iniquities: Whence it has been made a Question, considering the Presumption and yet Weakness of the Mind, Whether the Learned are not more subject to dangerous Error and Mistake, than the Simple and Ignorant? So near a Relation is there betwixt Science and Pride, the relying on our own Judgment, and being deceived.

But however, such is the Obscurity of Things, and the Inability of our Faculties, that the truly Wise of every Age have despaired of finding it out. Even *Cicero* never hoped to declare the Fullness of Truth, but only to express somewhat that resembled, and might approach near unto it. Notwithstanding therefore the Pretence of Divine and Moral Truths being so obvious, they are not of such easy Access in other Parts of Knowledge: The Search is tedious and embarrassing; close Attention and unwearied Application must be used; yet the farther we penetrate into Nature, the thicker does that Darkness appear, wherein all Things are involved. The more excellent the Knowledge is, the more remote doth it lie from the common Level and Observation of Men; and the greater the Difficulties to be removed, before a clear and solid Judgment can be fixed. For the Truth of this I need only appeal to the Learned, whether their Enquiries are not often fruitless, in search of Things beyond their Reach; too great for us to comprehend, or not fitting for us to know. And shall the Knowledge of God, and of ourselves, the most arduous

Acad. Q.  
I. 4. n. 3.



ous Task, be accomplished with the least Pains and Difficulty?

I speak the Sentiments of Heathens as well as Christians. “Are there not very few, says *Plato*,<sup>Repub. 5. P. 476.</sup> “if any, who are able to contemplate, *αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν, καὶ ὡτὸ*, *beauty in itself, according to it- self*; Nay, that the Power of discovering what “was best, was not common, but peculiar to the “Judgment of *Jupiter*, (which is a full Assertion, “that Reason is not the Measure, Rule, or Canon of it.)” And again, I say, “It is not possible for Men to be blessed, and happy here,<sup>Epinom. P. 973.</sup> “except some few only.”

I shall add the Sentiments of a learned Divine of our own. “If we reflect upon the common “Nature of Man, or upon our own Constitution,<sup>Dr. Barrow, vol. 3. p. 318.</sup> “we cannot but find our Conceits of Wisdom very absurd, if we observe the Blindness of our “Mind, and the Fickleness of Human Reason. “If we mark how painful the Search, and how “difficult the Comprehension is, of any Truth; “how hardly the most Sagacious descry any thing; “how easily the most Judicious mistake; how the “most Learned everlastingly dispute; and the “Wisest irreconcilably clash about Matters seeming most familiar: How the wiser a Man is, “and the more Experience he gaineth, the less “confident he is in his own Judgment, and the “more sensible he groweth of his own Weakness; “how dim the Sight is of the most Perspicacious, “and how shallow the Conceptions of the most “Profound; how narrow is the Horizon of our “Knowledge, and how immensely the Region of “our Ignorance is distended; how imperfectly “and uncertainly we know those few Things, to “which our Knowledge reacheth; how answerably to such Experience we are told in holy  
Writ,

Writ, "That every Man is brutish in his Knowledge ;  
 " That Wisdom is hid from the Eyes of all Men, and  
 " is not found in the Land of the Living."

Such Authorities ought to make us at least hesitate, before we admit so boldly advanced a Proposition : That Reason can discover and know the deep Things of God, declare his Existence and Attributes, discern his Will, distinguish exactly in Matters of Duty and of Sin ; when it thus falters and stumbles in every other Part of Knowledge, and is so liable to mistake Truth for Falshood, and Falshood for Truth.

Or how comes it to pass, that they who are Masters of the Dialectick Sciences, so able to guide our Reason, assist in the Discovery of Truth, and fix the Understanding in Possession of it, can find no sure Criterion for Judgment or Assent, but the Result of all their tedious Study, is no more than Probability ?

Cic. Nat.  
 D. 1. 1.  
 n. 5.

Quint. 12.  
 10. Such was *Quintilian's* Complaint : *Non tempus nobis deeſſe, verum industriam, ordinem, rationem, & modum ſciendi.* Men of Learning find many Requisites are wanting, besides Genius, Leisure, and Inclination, to the Discernment of Truth and Increase of Knowledge : And that just Principles, exact Method, and correct Reasoning, are not without difficulty made familiar to the Studies and the Minds of Men. Among the few wise, to excel in one Science, is a Character of distinguishing Merit ; to excel in more, of a rare and uncommon Genius ; to excel in all, is yet to come.

But the Limits of human Reason cannot be very extensive, when it is nonplus'd with every common Production of Nature. The overflowing of the Nile, for a long Course of Ages, wearied and baffled the Wisdom of the Ancients ; and happy was he that could assign a Reason for it, that could not easily be disproved. *Aristotle* threw himself into the

Vid. Diod.  
 Sic. Herodot.  
 Strabo, &c.

*Euripus,*

*Euripus*, for not being able to account for its Fluxes. Vid. Laſt. To believe the *Antipodes*, was a Specimen of Mad- P. 237. nefs or Delirium; the World laughed at ſo prodigious a Conceit, that Mens Heels ſhould be higher than their Heads, Fruits and Trees grow downward, Hail and Snow fall upwards to the Earth. Even ſome very learned Chriſtians durſt not admit ſo bold a Propoſition, leſt Mankind ſhould be forced to look out for another Parent beſides *Adam*. So long-lived is Ignorance, that in the Eighth Century *Virgil* Biſhop of *Saltzburgh* was publickly accuſed of Hereſy and Impiety, for believing this monſtrous Doctrine, thatt he Earth was round, and every part of it inhabited: Pope *Zachary* ordered a Proceſs againſt him, and that if the Articles were proved, that he ſhould be excommunicated and degraded.

I won't ſay this is a Reproach to Nature, but that it is prodigious, if Men, with all their Philoſophy, could not account for the Floods in the *Nile*, or the Form of the Globe they lived on; nay that it was never done, till a *Newton* gave a Gueſs at it, and the *French* Mathematicians went to *Torneo* to try the Experiment, and confirmed it; yet could with eaſe diſcover the Regions of Heaven, and him who ſat upon the Throne in them.

To omit a thouſand Particulars: How has that fruitleſs Enquiry, whether there be a Vacuum, and what it is, exerciſed the Wits of all Ages? The *Pythagoreans* would eſtabliſh it as the Means whereby the World breathed. The *Stoicks* made it an infinite Space, in which the World ſhould be conſumed by Fire. *Poſſidonius*, not an infinite Space, but juſt as much as would ſerve for the Diſſolution of the World. *Plato* and *Ariſtole* denied it; every one preferring the Opinion that leaſt ſhock'd them, without being able to answer the Difficulties objected againſt it.

In the last Ages, some defined a Vacuum to be a Privation of Body, that is a Nothing. *Gassendus*, to avoid that, plunges into an equal Absurdity, by imagining some Beings which are neither corporeal nor spiritual, neither Substance nor Accidents. The *Cartesians* deny the Possibility of a Vacuum; as *Leibnitz* and others do from the great Perplexities found in the Supposition. *Locke* could not answer the Questions of the *Cartesians*, but by proposing others equally obscure freely acknowledges, that he knows not even what Space, or Extension, or Substance are. And if we are ignorant of the Nature of Substance, what can we comprehend truly? Then *Newton* arises, and entirely destroys the Physics of *Descartes*, asserts a Vacuum to be so absolutely necessary, that without it the Motion of the Planets and the Consequences thereof, are Things inexplicable and impossible.

Even among the Mathematicians, who pretend not to move a Step without Demonstration, we find some affirm, and others deny, and Disputes prevail in that as well as other Sciences; which shews that Truth is sometimes lost among them: That their Demonstrations do not always carry Evidence, and that they themselves cannot always see through the mist of infinite Diminutions, where a finite Atom is divisible to Infinities of Infinites.

To which of these great Idols then shall we bend our Knee, or live in a perpetual State of Scepticism? Or may we not learn, that there are Bounds to the most exalted Understandings, and Room to doubt whether they can find out what is comprehensible; when it is so hard to comprehend Motion, Extension, or the least Dust of Matter.

Another Question of no small Importance, and not fully cleared to this day, is *πόθεν τὰ κακά*, whence or what is the Origin of Evil? Every Fool is able to make  
make

make the Question, but few Men so wise, as to be either able to give, or fit to receive sufficient Answer to it, according to the Depth of the Matter itself; says a very learned Man: For what Philosopher or Divine has treated this Subject so accurately as to remove all Objections, and give thorow Satisfaction to the Minds of those who search for it?

Metaphysicians have here a noble Field for their abstracted Flights, whether, according to *Durandus*, there be any divine Concourse in Sin? Whether, with others, Moral Evil has any real Essence, or real efficient Cause, or only deficient? Whether there be any pure Evil? Whether it be a Privation of Being, or a real positive Being? Whether it has not some natural Good for its Subject, and so the entitative material Act of Sin be physically or morally good? By what Degrees of Permission an all-wise and merciful God suffered Sin to enter into the World, since he abhors the least Appearance of Evil? &c.

The elder Heathens, when they observed the Wickedness and Misery of Man, had no other way to solve it, but by admitting two Principles, the one good, and the other bad, as the Causes of these different Appearances in the World. This, *Plutarch* tells us, was the best Account, the most ancient and universal he could meet with. Among the latter Pagans, *Celsus* says, “ It is difficult for those who are Orig. cont. not Philosophers, to know the Nature of Evil.” Cels. l. 4. But his own Account is, “ That Matter is the Sub- P. 206. ject of all Evil, to which it adheres; That the Evil in Things, neither formerly, nor at present, nor for the future, can be more or less; for the Nature of all things is alike, and the Generation of Evil always the same.” *Iamblichus* freely confesses that he knew not the Origin or Cause of it. De Myst. § 4. c. 6. In other Places, he produces it from those Demons, Id. c. 7. who were by Nature wicked: Tho’ in the Sense of the *Greeks*, they were not wicked by Choice, but by

Id. c. 7. Creation and Necessity. So that whilst he would free the Gods from being the Cause of Evil, he directly makes them the Authors of it: Or else he imagines, that Evil proceeds from the different Parts, Powers, and Influences of the Universe; yet of these God is the Former.

So among Christians, *Origen* complains, That if there be some Points more difficult than others, we may justly reckon among them this of the Origin of Evil. Reason has never yet answered, but rather entangled itself in the Scruples and Difficulties that spring up here: We have nothing to do but to acquiesce in Revelation: That *God made Man upright, but he sought out many Inventions*. And tho' we are not able to comprehend the Rule of Divine Proceedings, yet we are assured, that he cannot act but with the most perfect Justice and Goodness, without running into those Cautions and Niceties which learned Men are forced to use in the Explanation of these Points: That Sin cannot be said absolutely and simply to be from God, but only with this Addition or Limitation, that the Act, as it is a real Entity, is from God; Therefore God is not the Cause of Sin, but is the prime efficient Cause of the material entitative Act of Sin. What miserable Jargon is Philosophy, wading out of its Depths?

Is not the World still divided about the Doctrine of Predestination, Free-Will, &c. each Sect accusing the other of making God the Author of Sin, or of denying his Providence, and a thousand other Reproaches, which they think inevitably attend every Hypothesis but their own?

And if Nature, from the Contemplations of it, must be our Guide to supernatural Truths; yet what Truth in Nature is the most sagacious Enquirer able to comprehend? The least Occurrence gravels us: All our Reasonings and Experience but slowly discover the Contrivance and Intrigues of Providence:

Nor

Nor can we thoroughly find out one thing in the Frame of Beings; they being made by a Knowledge so far superior and transcendent to that of ours.

In the beloved Study of the Ancients, that of the Heavenly Bodies, those surest Guides to their Creator, their Discoveries were slow and inaccurate, and of their amazing Velocity, Distance, Magnitude, the Order, Laws, and Regularity of their Motion, more Discoveries have been made in the Space of two Centuries, than had been since the World began: And how many unknown Worlds, and Species of invisible Creatures have the Telescope or Microscope opened to the Moderns, that have enriched and extended their Knowledge of Nature, so vastly beyond that of former Ages?

Nay the clearer View of the Wisdom of God in our own Frame, the Circulation of the Blood, the milky and lymphatick Vessels, the Motion of the Heart, the Contexture of the Brain, on which our very Being and Life depends, and other things (without which the Mechanick Structure of the Bodies cannot be understood) are but lately brought to Light, the Discoveries of Yesterday.

Will not the Rallery of the Woman to *Thales*, who fell into a Ditch, whilst contemplating the Stars, suit all the Boasters of Reason? *How should you know what passes in the Heavens, when you see not what is just at your Feet?* If Nature be impenetrable, and its Springs only known to the Maker and Director of them; if we know so little of the least of things, how much less, and with what more difficulty must we know any thing of the God of Nature? Is it reasonable to believe that spiritual and immortal Subjects, are the only ones to be found out with Ease and Certainty by the wiser Sort, but not so by the Commons of the World, who nevertheless are as much interested therein, as he that sits in the Chair, or in the Senate? The whole is against Fact, against the

Experience and Observation of every Age ; it is what Man never did ; what he is under a Necessity of not doing.

To apply this (in the Words of a most learned  
 Bp Lond. Prelate) “ It is very unfair in those who deny the  
 2d Pastor. “ Need and Expedience of a Divine Revelation, to  
 Let. p. 9. “ argue in favour of Reason, as if all Mankind were  
 “ *Philosophers*, and every one had sufficient Capa-  
 “ city, Leisure and Inclination, to form a Scheme  
 “ of Duties for the Direction of his own Life. For  
 “ it is not enough to say, that there are learned  
 “ Men in the World, who are *able* to form such  
 “ Schemes ; since, whatever their own Ability may  
 “ be, they have no Right to *command* Assent and  
 “ Obedience from others ; nor can any one ratio-  
 “ nally receive and embrace their Schemes, without  
 “ following them through the Chain of Reasonings  
 “ upon which they are built, and judging whether  
 “ the Reasonings will support the Schemes. And  
 “ further (in case those learned Men *differ*) without  
 “ judging which of them is in the Right, and which  
 “ in the Wrong : A Task that the Generality of  
 “ Mankind are as unequal to, as they are to the  
 “ framing the Schemes themselves. And the Dif-  
 “ ficulty is still greater, when we find the same Phi-  
 “ losopher differing from himself, now advancing  
 “ one Opinion, and then again leaning to another ;  
 “ at one time *clear* and *positive*, at another time  
 “ *doubtful* and *wavering*, upon the very same Point ;  
 “ in which Case his Opinion on either side can  
 “ amount to no more in the Result, than to prove  
 “ him a Guide very unfit for the People to follow.”

To this Consideration of human Reason, as the Instrument of Natural Religion, and which from the Authorities of the wisest Men, seems insufficient for so great a Task ; some particular Circumstances must be added, as necessarily supposed to attend the Person, who has the Use or Exercise of it.

Lord



Lord *Herbert* would have him one of very extraordinary Abilities, but who has received no external Informations, by Tradition, Revelation, or otherwise. His Lordship saw the Necessity of making such a Demand, from the extraordinary Part that was to be acted; but could see none for the granting it to him in the present Controversy.

But let us suppose some Person appearing in the World, in full Proportion of Body and Mind, *i. e.* with all his Parts and Faculties complete, as much accomplished as we can imagine any one to be, not improved by Consideration and Experience, having no one to instruct him, nor any other Light whereby to discover any thing, but his own unassisted Reason. The Question is, Whether this Person, by the sole Strength and Evidence of his own Mind, from contemplating himself, and what he sees about him, could arrive to any *competent* Apprehension of a First Cause of all these things? Whether he could in any tolerable measure or degree, by Consideration of, and Reflection upon himself; or, by Collection and Inference from sensible Objects, find out that Being, who was the Author of all others, together with that Worship wherewith he ought to be honoured. If he could not, then it will follow, that the Existence of a God could never be discovered by the Light of Nature only; and that Man either has not Reason, or has it to no purpose.

This is stated in their own Words; and we must make a few Observations upon them.

1. That it is always made a Postulatum, and taken for granted, that the Heathens did attain this Knowledge by the Help of Nature only. Which is begging the Question, and false in fact; it being evident from all History, and their own Confession, that they had other Means of Instruction, much shorter than the Road of Nature, and much more explicit.

2. That if Man cannot make these Discoveries by Reason, he has it to no purpose, is an unjustifiable Expression : For Man may have Reason to all the Purposes of his Being, though not to all the Counsels and Purposes of God : Man is essentially a dependent Creature in Mind and Body ; his Mind is suitable to his Nature ; and for a natural dependent Reason to discover Supernaturals, is not according to the Nature received ; and therefore unnatural.

3. Nor is it a just Insinuation to say (as *Puffendorf* does) That tho' 'tis very probable that the chief Heads of Natural Law were expressly delivered by God Almighty to the first Mortals, and were from them communicated to others by Custom and Institution ; yet the Knowledge of that Law may nevertheless be styled Natural, inasmuch as the necessary Truth and Certainty of it may be drawn from the Use of Natural Reason.

It is certain that all the Heads of it are in the highest manner agreeable to Reason, and what it will assent to as soon as proved : But as Natural Reason stands distinguished from Revelation, it could not discern or prove the Truth of one of them, before it was otherwise manifested to it. And so his Argument suggests. God expressly delivered them, which he need not have done, could Reason so certainly have known them without it ; and that Knowledge did not come this way, is accounted for, by their being communicated to others by Custom and Institution.

4. Another Distinction not sufficiently attended to, is betwixt the Light of Reason and the Law of it ; for tho' Truth be the Object of the Mind, and all Law be Truth, yet all Truth is not Law, *i. e.* does not oblige. We assent to a thing as true, from sensible Evidence, or by discerning the Certainty of its Terms and Meaning. But to believe such Truths to be a Law, we must go a great deal further, and  
know

know them to be the Will of some higher Power, who has a Right to exact Obedience ; for Law necessarily induces an Obligation ; and nothing can oblige but Power, which is only from the Will of a rightful Superior.

Reason is to enquire and determine concerning the Truth or Falshood of things, which is a vast Province ; therefore by no means usefess or given in vain : For we cannot believe what is contrary to Reason, or what we do not perceive the Evidence of, nor any further than as we understand it. So neither can Obedience be necessary, till we discover (or have sufficient Grounds so to do) the Connexion of such with the Divine Will. But then, to know a thing to be true, and that it is the Command of God, superinduces an Obligation not to be dispensed with. And here begin the Actings of Mens Consciences : What before was only discursive, now commences a judicial Faculty. But Reason, by seeing the Evidence of the Law, is no more a Law to the Mind than the Sun is to the Eye, or to its own Being or Motion, tho' by the help of it we see one, and are convinced of the other.

Let us now suppose this Person (or, if it be any Advantage, a College of such) in a Solitude or State of Nature ; making use of the several Means afforded him to discover the End of his Being, and consider whether they are sufficient to such Purpose.

The Means generally assigned, are,

*First*, The Works of Creation.

*Secondly*, His own Frame.

*Thirdly*, The Congruity and Fitness of Things.

*First* then, Let him carefully observe the outward Frame of Things, the Course of the Rivers, the Flowing of the Sea, the Productions of the Vegetable World, the Number and Variety of the Creatures, the different Qualities of the Elements, the Vicissitude of Times, the Motions of the heavenly Bodies, the regular Succession of Light and

Darkness, the Rising of the Stars, and the Return of Seasons, the Renewing of the Bloom and Verdure of the Earth. That there is a constant Round of Things; a Death, and Reviviscence in Nature, without any Alteration or real Decay, either in the Earth on which he dwells, or in the Roof of Heaven which he beholds, but all move in a regular Course and Order.

Such Observations would undoubtedly raise Astonishment and Admiration in his Mind: But if he could from thence learn a Deity, it would be a kind Piece of Instruction in those who are Masters of the Subject, to shew us where the Mind would set out, what Mediums it would take, and how advance Step by Step without Danger or Error; gradually overcoming the Imperfections of Nature, and the many Difficulties which constantly occur in such Enquiries; till it broke through all that Darkness with which it is naturally surrounded, and opened a Way to the Throne of God.

The Fallacy which deceives so many, is not attending to the Difference between an assisted and unassisted Mind; and makes them ready to conclude, that because we are able to do this by the Guidance of Revelation, that therefore an unformed Mind would have taken the same Steps; which is boasting of the Use of a Dark-lantern at Noon-day; they are as different as Light and Darkness. It is an Argument that concludes nothing, because impossible to be proved, therefore is not to be admitted or relied on.

But to return: Many Years must pass in observing the Qualities of the Elements out of which all Things are compounded; the Nature of Things, their Manner of Existence, Powers and Operations; what are their Intents and Purposes, what their Productions and Effects, their Appointment and End; by what steady Rules they act, in the long Chain and Subordination of Causes, how one is guided and overruled in the

next,

next, that by a Superior, and so on, till he comes to the highest visible Cause ; for without this, he cannot have any Knowledge of visible Objects, so as to enable his Understanding to proceed in further Enquiries.

And since Nature is so dark and obscure, he must raise his Speculations from confused and inevident Notions to those that are clear and evident : As also descend in this Science from Generals to Particulars. He must know the Cause and Original of the Dispositions, Qualities, and Operations of Beings, and wherein their Perfection consists : He must have a clear and accurate Discernment of the Origin and Generation of Things ; the Construction, Temperaments and Affections of Natural Bodies, their Gravity and Levity, Heat and Cold, Driness and Moisture ; he must with the closest View penetrate and unfold the hidden Springs of Nature, to what are owing Motion and Life, and from what Privation, Diffolution come ; he must be exactly acquainted with the Rules and Measures of Time and Motion, with the Situation, Figure, Order, Revolutions and Influence of the Heavenly Bodies ; the Nature of Time, Place, and Quantity ; with ten thousand other Disquisitions, necessary to take in the vast Compass of the Universe, and search them to the Bottom, so as to remove all Objection and arrive at Certainty, otherwise his whole Scheme would be but Imagination, and he could never trace out that Wisdom and Design which must lead him to the Creator : For if there be Error in his Procedure, in his Reasonings and Reflexions, they will bewilder him in that mighty Labyrinth, but never direct him to Truth.

*Secondly,* He must carefully observe the Operations of his Mind, how it apprehends, collects, compares and infers ; what are the Measures and Degrees of Credibility, and fix some certain Rules to distinguish Truth from Falshood ; to determine concerning

cerning any Proposition that offers itself, by discerning how far he is to give his Assent to it: For without some such clear infallible Rule, he can never know what to believe or disbelieve, but must remain in perpetual Doubt and Suspence, or by admitting false Principles wander in Error and Delusion.

*Thirdly*, After an accurate View of Nature, he must apprehend the Harmony and Connexion of the whole, the Reasons, Fitnesse, and Congruity of Things, and thence collect such Rules as are most agreeable to Right Reason, and proper to direct his Actions in such a Manner, as is congruous and fitting to the Nature he enjoys, and to those Ends and Purposes for which he must be intended.

Now if we consider the slow Gradations by which all this must be accomplished, without any Monitor or Assistance, but Common Reason, such as the greatest Part of Mankind have, the Age of *Methuselah* would not bring it to any tolerable Perfection; and since the united Labours of the World for thousands of Years did not do it, we may safely pronounce it impossible to be done. All the Philosophy of the Ancients could not settle one Principle in Nature; *Plutarch* and others have transmitted their Sentiments, which shew how divided they were in Opinion, how slender, imperfect, or false their utmost Knowledge was; and the Dispute was never settled from whence Things had their Source, from Fire, Earth, Air, or Water; from Numbers, Atoms, Ideas, Plenum, Vacuum, Infinite, &c. Through a Course of so many Ages, there was no Certainty, no Demonstration: Their Science was Opinion or Conjecture, and their Truth but Probability. What then could the Natural Man do, who was an absolute Stranger to the Works of God, unacquainted with his own Original, and every Cause, with no Assistance but his own Reason and Observation?

And

And yet the arduous Labour is yet to come ; after his utmost Attainments he is a free independent Creature, under no Restraint on his Liberty, Will, or Acting ; for Truth however excellent would not lay an Obligation on him, till he perceives it to be the Will of a Superior Being ; then it has the Force of a Law, and becomes a directive Rule of Life: For as God made Man a rational Creature, so did he also a free one, and his highest Freedom must consist in the Right he has to judge of Things, according to his own View of them ; and in the Case before us, it is impossible to be otherwise. A natural Man must judge for himself ; nothing can conclude him but his own Reason : And however groundless or imaginary it may be, such will be his Law : For no Man can believe contrary to his Conscience, and that is modelled according to his own Sentiments of Truth.

So that from the Fitness and Agreeableness of natural Things, he must trace out the Existence and Nature of a first supernatural Cause ; and what Truths are so congruous to his Will, as to induce upon him an Obligation to obey them: And to make this Law effectual, he must be assured he has a Soul, that it is immortal, and after something happens, which he is yet ignorant of, but what he may observe in other Creatures, Death ; another thing will happen, which he never could observe or think of ; that his dead Body shall live again, or his Soul subsist in a separate State, and another World, which he is altogether ignorant of, and undergo what he never heard of, Everlasting Happiness or Misery.

It is in vain to urge, That Reason can find out a little of God, a little of his Will, or Part of his Nature ; to have a competent Apprehension of them, or in a tolerable Degree ; those Scales of Diminution to which Natural Religion always is reduced, when

when Men think seriously on it : For what do we understand of a Thing by knowing little or nothing of its Nature? It is a superficial kind of Science, which being of little Use, there is no Cause for Nature to boast of it; nor do such piece-meal Discoveries redound the least to the Honour of the Author of Nature.

However, all the Stock of Materials he can lay in, to raise this mighty Superstructure, are such Collections and Inferences, as he can make from sensible Objects; the Imagination is furnished with Ideas by no other Inlet than the Senses; except by Instruction, which is here not to be supposed. And let his Mind divide and reflect on Matter, never so often, it will be impossible to produce a Notion of an immaterial Object. And how from such low contemptible Principles, by what Climax, what *Jacob's* Ladder, he can rear his Imagination so high, as to look into Heaven; or bring what is invisible and incomprehensible, down to the Level of his Beholding, deserves a serious Examination.

To prove the Sufficiency of Man for these things; there are two principal Arguments generally alledged.

The First is, That the Being of God may be found out and demonstrated from the Grandeur, Beauty, and Order of his Works; and the invisible Things of him, his infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness may be clearly seen and understood from the things which are made; and the Godhead, or his glorious Attributes and essential Perfections, are marked or fixed like an Impression on a Seal, on the great Volume of the Universe, in such large perspicuous Characters, that whoever duly attends may plainly read them.

The Second is, That the Heathens, by the Use of these Means alone, did arrive at the Knowledge of God; his Existence, Nature, and Providential Government



vernment of the World; and thence inferred the Necessity of Moral Duties, and the Obligation they were under to practise and observe them.

The first Argument is said to receive great Confirmation from the latter, as being a pregnant Example and Illustration of it; and therefore may very properly be examined before it; for if the Heathens did not discover divine Things in this manner, it will amount to a Demonstration that none ever did or can do it.

St. Paul, to whom we may appeal as a Scholar and a Gentleman, as freely as to a Philosopher or Historian, is expressly (as we have seen) of a contrary Opinion; *That in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God.* 1 Cor. 1. 31. In the admirable Effects of Creation and Providence, with all the worldly Wisdom of Philosophy they knew him not. But let us take Dr. Clarke's Exposition of these Words, "That in fact Men, without the Assistance of Revelation, did not attain to a right Knowledge of God in any considerable Degree. For, as the Eye, when put out, discerns the Light no more than if it had never been at all framed to be an Organ of Seeing; so when the Understanding is darkened by vain Imaginations, &c. what wonder is it if Men, in a manner, cease to know him who is the Author of all Knowledge and Understanding. For it is God that teaches Man knowledge, Pl. xciv. 10. And the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding, Job xxxii. 8. And the Philosophers themselves, in those very Inquiries wherein they profess themselves to be most wise, became Fools, and some argued themselves out of the Belief of the very Being of a God, &c." Here Dr. Clarke tears up the very Roots of Natural Religion, in justly affirming that all divine Knowledge is immediately from God and his Inspiration.

Nothing

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Nothing can be clearer than this Passage of *St. Paul*, to the Purpose for which it is alledged: That what Knowledge the Heathens had of God, they did not attain it from the Consideration of his Works; or that notwithstanding all their Attention to his infinite Wisdom in the Creation and Government of the World, they did not come to the Knowledge of the true God.

Clarke  
vol. 2d  
p. 366.

Nor does the Explanation some learned Men have given it in favour of the Natural Law, clear up the Difficulty they had a mind to remove. "They knew him, say they (though the Apostle says they knew him not) but obscurely; but in a manner; in no considerable Degree; and they knew him not aright." But I hope it was not the Wisdom of God, nor his Works, that led them into this obscure wrong Knowledge of him: And what is an obscure Knowledge? But where there is little Light or Evidence in the Mind, the Notions are confused, nothing perspicuous, distinct, or clear, not able to distinguish one Object from another; or what is it to know a thing not aright, but to have false Conceptions of it, no Agreement between the Object and the Idea? what in Nature is true, becomes Falshood in them. There is no Conformity between the Apprehension, and the thing to be apprehended; if this be true, the other inevitably must be false; so to know God not aright, is to know (as the *Athenians* did) a God, that was unknown to them: But to have the Name of a thing without the Meaning, to know a thing by a Nature, Qualities, and Operations essentially contrary to it, is to know nothing of it, and becomes another Manner of expressing the utmost Ignorance.

And yet it is much to be lamented, that we cannot fix the Original of this Knowledge, bad as it is; that we have no Footsteps of such Discoveries; and

and that the Abettors of Natural Religion will not tell us, by whom, and in what Age it was done; for surely the Name of so sagacious a Person would have been sacred to all Posterity; but they are willingly silent on this Point, and so is Antiquity; all it declares is, that Religion was what they received from their Forefathers, or borrowed from other Colonies or Schools. And let any one Age be pitched upon, and I will undertake to shew a precedent one knew as much, till we gradually rise to the first Dispersion of Mankind. And as to the later *Greeks* who imported a new Stock of Learning among their ignorant Countrymen; they are not so vain as to attribute it to Nature or themselves, but ingenuously own whence they had those Principles, so different from, and nobler than any their Fathers had been acquainted with.

And if studying the Works be the Method of knowing the Workman, it is somewhat mysterious, that these last Ages which have so vastly improved Natural Philosophy, should have made no new Discoveries in the Divine Nature; which is neither more nor less than it was before, just so far as God revealed it, and no human Mind can carry it further; yet we see every Day in these Studies fresh Reasons to admire his Wisdom, and adore his Power; but not to add to his Nature or Perfections.

And what wholly enervates this Argument is, that notwithstanding the many Discoveries the World has been blessed with, of the Appearances of Nature; yet the plainest of them are abstruse and perplexing, not one Point so determined, but there is room for doubt. Though the Method of accounting for some Phænomena be highly probable, no one can say he has a clear Perception of them, nor can demonstrate the Laws whereby they act; but there are Millions of Appearances and  
Designs

Designs in Nature, that we can give no tolerable account of; the Powers and Operations of which are altogether invisible and unknown. And to say that visible Effects which cannot direct us to their own invisible imperceptible Causes, should be Teachers of the invisible Godhead, is preposterous and absurd. Nature is the Work of God, and till we can reach her hidden Springs and Designs, it is irrational to think of piercing what lies so vastly beyond them, the invisible Perfections of the Workman. It is making the same Cause able to produce the greater, but not the lesser Effect.

To convince us how sandy a Foundation this Argument is, we need only look back and observe how many Ages were spent, what Force of long and severe Study was used, before Men were able to form the first Draught of an universal System: What was this owing to, but the not discerning the Reason and Manner of the grand Appearances in Nature? and to pretend Demonstration from Principles unknown, is the Effect of Ignorance or Pride.

And why should we imagine that to be so easily done, which by the Acknowledgment of the Maintainers of Reason never was done? This very Point, the Foundation of Natural Religion, nonplus'd the Wits of the World, they knew nothing of it; and they attributed Creation to Chance, Matter, Combination of Atoms, Laws of Motion, &c. to every thing but what they ought to have done. And these few Words, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*, contain more true Wisdom than all their Volumes of Philosophy.

But the Works of God had an Effect quite contrary to what they are produced to support; instead of leading Men to know the invisible things of God by their natural Light and Reason; their very Reasonings and Speculations on them, led

Men to form the most fabulous and extravagant Opinion of Things: And instead of drawing that Conclusion which the Apostle shews they ought, *Heb. xi. 3. That the things which are seen, were not made by those things which do appear,* they did conclude them to be the Work of visible Causes, not of an invisible Agent. And though among many great traditional Truths, they had this of Creation, yet by attempting to give Reasons for it, they utterly confounded it, and introduced a Set of false and idle Physiological Speculations.

“ If these things (says a learned Author) were <sup>Shuck-</sup> discoverable by Reason, and brought to Light <sup>ford.</sup>  
 “ by a due Course of thinking, and then related  
 “ to their Children; what were the Traces of this  
 “ Reasoning? where to be found? or, how were  
 “ they lost? 'Tis strange these things should be so  
 “ obvious at first, that an early Attempt should  
 “ discover so much Truth, and that all the Wit  
 “ and Learning that came after, for five or six  
 “ thousand Years, should, instead of improv-  
 “ ing it, only puzzle and confound it. If *Adam*,  
 “ or some other Person of extraordinary Learning,  
 “ had by a Chain of Reasoning brought these  
 “ Truths into the World, some Hints or other of  
 “ the Argument would have remained, as well as  
 “ the Truths produced by it; or some succeeding  
 “ Author would, at one time or other, have rea-  
 “ soned as fortunately as his Predecessor: But no-  
 “ thing of this sort happened; instead of it we  
 “ find, that the early Ages had a great Stock of  
 “ Truths, which they were so far from having  
 “ Learning enough to invent or discover, that  
 “ they could not so much as give a good Account  
 “ of the true Meaning of many of them. A due  
 “ Consideration of which must lead us to believe,  
 “ that God at first revealed these things unto Men,  
 “ acquainted them with what he had done in the  
 “ Creation

“ Creation of the World, which they communicated to their Children’s Children.” It cannot be accounted for any other way ; it is what Fact, History, and the State of their Knowledge obliges us to believe of them.

When the first Planters of the World had forgot every thing of the God of their Forefathers but the Name of such a Being ; had no Instructors but the Painting of the Fields, the Flowing of the Sea, the Motions of the Heavens, and the Reflexions they could make upon themselves ; their Time consumed in the necessary Toil of clearing the Ground, and making Provision for a miserable Support : Thousands of Years must have passed, before they could have formed such a Body of Philosophy, and Knowledge of the Works of God, as thence to infer the Necessity of his Existence, or the Perfections of his Nature. And why may we not conclude, that if God had not made a Revelation, they would never have reasoned nor thought of him at all ; since notwithstanding the Stock of Knowledge they once had, they could not retain in their Minds any just Notions of him ; but turned them into a Lye, Fictions and Fables of their own Invention ? And when Knowledge again increased in the World, the very Contemplation of visible things fixed their Admiration there, and hindered their Ascent to the Author and Maker of them.

Which will no way seem incredible to one that observes what happens in his own Days : That a curious Inspection into the Art and Mechanism of Nature has too frequently been a Prejudice to Faith ; keeping the Eye constantly upon earthly things, creates a Diffidence of the heavenly ones ; and too high a Refinement upon the Knowledge of the Creature, has made Men weak and doubtful as to Faith in the Creator.

Nor is the whole more improbable than it is impossible; for a Pagan ignorant of the Supreme Being, to make this quick Transition, to know the Agent by the Act, and from the visible World behold divine Invisibilty. *Aristotle* would have asked such Naturalists, what indelible Character the Heavens and Earth had of being created; for there is no Geometrical Method whereby Reason could proceed from Principle to Principle, from Proposition to Proposition, as to conclude in that manner. If it be asked why, the Answer is, Because no created Mind ever did or can pass that Gulph, from Nothing to Something, how Nothing was brought into Existence and became Something; to bring these Extremes together, and reconcile Terms so infinitely distant, which no Power less than Infinite can effect; these are Acts solely of Omnipotence, and therefore Omnipotence only is the Measure of them; and to say that Man could apprehend, that Non-entity was carried into Being, and thus to measure the Almighty's Magnitude, is no more than carnal Pride, and Man making himself God; he that can go thus far, can also tell us, what God did before the World was made.

*Plato*, I am sure, disclaims all this Arrogance. “When we speak, says he, of the Nature of God, Timæus, and the Creation of the Universe, we ought to p. 29. be content, if what we offer be but probable; for more than that is not to be required: For it must be remembered that I who speak, and you who are Hearers, are but Men; and if we can only attain some probable Fable or Tradition of these things, *περὶ τῶν ἑκείνων ἀπόφα μύθου*, we may not enquire further about them.”

After having taken a View of the Insufficiency both of the Instrument and Means of Knowledge, I come to consider more particularly the *Second* Argument, generally urged in support of Natural Religion;

ligion, That the Supreme Being may be evidently known by the Works of Creation, &c. A Subject always opened with the greatest Triumph of Eloquence and Pomp of Words; as if the Sun and Moon were as faithful Preachers of the Law of Nature, as they are Signs for Seasons and Days and Years.

This must be confessed a soothing kind of Philosophy, as flattering the Mind, and greatly advancing the Dignity of human Nature; therefore easily admitted, though void of any Support from Scripture or Experience; and what I must be assured is false, though a thousand *Alexandrian* or *Vatican* Libraries affirmed the contrary.

The Spirit of God says expressly, *That through Faith we understand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God*, Heb. xi. 3.  $\rho\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ , not the  $\Delta\lambda\gamma\mu\alpha$ , but what it generally signifies, the Will, Decree, Order, and Command of God, without any Counsel or Assistance, without any Help or Materials prepared; but only, Let it be so, and it was so. The Words want no Comment, *Faith is the Substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*, ver. i. an Assent to a thing as credible, upon the Testimony of God, whose Relation is infallible; Reason therefore could never so much as have known that the Worlds were created, had not God communicated it. And there cannot be a greater Absurdity than to say, Man can find out God by the Works of Creation, yet cannot find out that Creation is the Work of God. Which was exactly the Case of the old Heathens, who never could determine who formed the World, nor when, nor how, nor out of what it was made.

But God revealed it as a Truth necessary to his rational Creatures: By this we understand, and are fully persuaded of its Truth. And as Faith is the Evidence of things not seen, that is the only Knowledge



ledge we have of God whom no Man hath seen: Or in other Words, he could not have been known, unless he had manifested himself. This is the Demonstration of the first Cause, and Origin of things, which Pagan Philosophy so earnestly longed for, but never attained.

St. Peter, 2d Epistle iii. 5. declares the same, *That by the Word of God, the Heavens were of old.* But an omnipotent *Fiat*, a creative Word, a speaking things into Being, is above the reach of created Minds; what Reason cannot possibly unfold; nor to be inferred from any ordinary Manifestation of divine Workings and Power in Causes or Effects: But is altogether extraordinary, supernatural, mysterious and a hidden Act of Volition and Omnipotence, *i. e.* of the very Essence; what therefore no created Intellect could discover, what it never did; there being no Philosopher who did not hold an eternal first Matter.

Is it not then to be feared, that *the Religion of Nature* draws the Abilities of the human Mind vastly above the Standard of Nature, in affirming that of all, which no one did attain, but by the Spirit and Power of God? But let us take care that whilst we exalt the Creature, we intrench not on the Prerogative of the Creator. And the Caution of a very learned Person becomes necessary here; while the Mind of Man keeps within its own proper Sphere, it acts with Security; but when once it strives to exert it self beyond its native Powers and Faculties, then it sinks into Weakness and Infirmity, and is ever liable to endless Error and Mistake: It hath no direct Perception, or immediate Consciousness beyond things sensible and human: So that in all its noblest Efforts, and most lofty Flights, it must ever have a steady Eye to the Earth, from whence it took its Rise; and always consider that it mounts upward with bor-

rowed Wings; for when once it presumes upon their being of its own natural Growth, and attempts a direct Flight to the heavenly Regions; then it falls headlong to the Ground, where it lies groveling in Superstition or Infidelity.

Creation is the Prerogative of God, what none can imitate, a Work proper and peculiar to him that is higher than the highest: And because he revealed it to us as a most prevailing Motive to apprehend his Greatness, dread his Power, admire his Wisdom, rely on his Providence; and thence learn to whom only our Adorations, our Prayers, and our Praises ought to be directed: Let us not assume this Glory to ourselves, and ascribe that Information to Man, which could not possibly come from any but God: It being to unassisted Reason, altogether unintelligible and incomprehensible, and therefore could not have been known without a Teacher.

Nor do I know one Passage in Scripture, which intimates that God intended his Works, as the Means whereby Men were to come to a Knowledge of his Existence; as it is certain he did not leave them to such an embarrassing Method, but manifested himself to the World, at various Times, and in sundry Manners. And wherever the Works of Omnipotence are appealed to, it is to shew the Greatness, not the Being of God; to display his supereminent Majesty and Dignity; and thereby dispose Men to a reverential Dread and Awe of him: So the Psalmist always uses it, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth.* Whence he draws this Inference: *Let all the Earth fear the Lord, let all the Inhabitants of the World stand in awe of him; for he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.*

Ps. xxxiii.  
6.

The same is affirmed by *Moses* of Miracles, the Signs and Wonders which God shewed on the Deliverance of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, Deut. iv. 35, 36. *That they might know that the Lord he is God, and that there is none else besides him. Out of Heaven he made thee to hear his Voice, that he might instruct thee.* It is urged to make them put their whole Trust and Dependence upon him. *Ye are the Blessed of the Lord, which made Heaven and Earth, put your Trust in the Lord. Happy is he whose Hope is in the Lord his God, who made Heaven and Earth, the Sea and all that is therein.* To dispose them to all Acts of Worship and Adoration. *The Sea is his, and he made it, and his Hands formed the dry Land: O come let us bow down and worship.* To ascribe Thanksgiving and Honour to him only: *For he alone doth great Wonders, by his Wisdom he made the Heavens, O give Thanks unto the God of Heaven.* And *Nehemiah* in his solemn Fast: *Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever. Thou hast made Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, with all their Host, the Earth and all Things that are therein, &c. And thou preservest them all, and the Host of Heaven worshippeth thee.* To declare his Supereminence to those who were ignorant of him: *Tell it among the Heathen, that the Lord he is King, and that it is he who hath made the round World so fast, that it cannot be moved.* And above all to warn them against Idolatry: *For among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works.* By this (as hath been shewn) he distinguishes himself, and shews the Vanity of Idols; and warns them not to learn the Ways of the Heathens, who are brutish and foolish, the Stock is a Doctrine of Vanities, Molten Images are the Work of Errors; *In the Time of their Visitation they shall perish.*

Pf. cxv. 15.

Pf. cxlviii.

Pf. xxviii.

Pf. cxviii.

Pf. cxviii.

Pf. cxviii.

Pf. cxv.

Pf. cxxxvi.

Neh. ix. 5.

6.

Psal. xcvi.

10.

Psal.

lxxxvi. 8.

Jer. x.

This was the Character which struck the greatest Awe, and most effectually exposed the Wickedness and Folly of going after strange Gods; And these Acts of Omnipotence are in every Part of Scripture repeated, to make Men know, and consider in their Hearts, *That the Lord he is God, in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath, there is none else.*

Deut. xxxiv. 39. *See now, that I, even I am he, and there is no God*  
 If. xlv. 8. *with me, neither is there any that can deliver out of my Hands. Ye are even my Witnesses, is there a God besides me? yea there is no God, I know not any; For he is the Lord that maketh all Things. But they shall all go to Confusion together that are Makers of Idols. They have no Knowledge, that set up the Wood of their graven Image, and pray unto a God that cannot save. Therefore, Look unto me, and be ye saved all the Ends of the Earth, for I am God, and there is none else. He is God of Gods, Lord of Lords, a great God, mighty and terrible, which regardeth not Persons, nor taketh Reward.*

If. xlv. 16, 20,  
 22.  
 Deut. x. 17.

So this Attribute of Omnipotence is described by those glorious Epithets of Almighty, the Lord of Hosts, of *Sabaotb* (*i. e.* of the Armies and Powers in Heaven and Earth) *Elshaddai*, signifying the Rule and Dominion which God hath over all, and the Strength, Force, and Power by which he is able to perform all Things. And upon the Right of Creation doth justly challenge that of Dominion, *I have made the Earth, and created Man upon it*, *Isaiah* xlv. 12. He can frame any thing as it pleaseth him; and whatever he makes, properly belongs to him, as the Lord and Master; that he can dispose of it according to his Pleasure. Because he creates, he must have an absolute and unlimited Government, Rule, and Dominion over all Things.

This is the constant Use made of it by the inspired Writers, not to prove there is a God, but to

to shew how great that God is, whose all Things are, both in Right and Possession, by Supremacy and Dominion: That from the Contemplation of his Works, they might be excited to admire that Wisdom which contrived, to adore that Power which produced, and to praise that Goodness which preserves the whole Creation: These are manifest Proofs, that his Nature is immense and infinite, his Authority supreme and absolute, his Power universal and unlimited, his Godhead and Glory admirable over all his Works.

For God's being our Maker, is the highest Proof of his Right to our Worship and Adoration; that it is the greatest Wickedness to offer Homage to the Creature, which can be only due to the one great and infinite Creator, whom alone we are to serve and please. Thus the glorious Inhabitants of Heaven that attend upon the Throne of God, when they worship him that liveth for ever and ever, make Omnipotence the Subject of their divine Adorations: *Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power, for thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they are and were created.* And this his faithful Servants upon Earth have always imitated in their Hymns of Praise: *The Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us. Be thankful unto him, and bless his Name.* So David, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. The Levites, Neh. ix. 6. Hezekiah, Isaiah xxxvii. 16, &c.

For what greater Power can there be, than to make the Heaven and the Earth out of Nothing; the Millions of Powers that are in the Heavens above, the admirable Variety of Faculties found on the Earth below? Is there any Wisdom like unto his, who in so manifold a Work made nothing superfluous or vain, and appointed to all Things the best Means to attain their End, a Law and Rule which they should observe? What Goodness

so unspeakable as to make every thing Good, and afford them sufficient Aid to their Happiness and Perfection? Such is the admirable Power, the incomparable Wisdom, the unspeakable Goodness of him that made the Heavens and the Earth. *But those Gods which made them not, shall perish.* He alone therefore is Almighty, Wise and Good; he alone is to be adored and worshipped: *For thus saith the Lord that created Jacob, and that formed Israel, before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me; I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.*

If. xliii. 1,  
10, 11.

This I conceive to be the true Application of such Passages in Scripture; and wish learned Men would consider whether a Mistake has not generally run through the Use of them in this Argument: Whether *Moses*, and the *Psalms*, and the *Prophets* did not always direct them to those who were well instructed in the Existence of a Deity, which was therefore an Article they needed not, nor did attempt to prove? Whether all all those with whom the *Apostles* reasoned in this manner, did not acknowledge a Supreme Being, though they did not know the true one; and consequently the Intent of representing him under this distinguishing Character, was to turn them from *Idols* to serve the *Living God*, which made the *World* and all *Things* therein? and no *Attribute* could so effectually demonstrate the *Transcendency* of his *Nature* above the *Gods* of the *World*, as that of *Creation*, which the *Heathens* had never applied to their *Deities*. And wherein every thing they saw was a sensible *Proof* of the *Majesty* of the *Godhead*; whatever they observed in the *Providential Government* of the *World*, was a *Memorial* and *Exhibition* of infinite *Wisdom* or *Power*, of *Justice* or *Punishment*.

From

From this they appeal to Common Reason, whether he who dwelleth in the Heavens could be confined in Temples? Whether a Being invisible and incorporeal could be represented by material Things, and the Framer of the Universe by the most ignoble Parts of it, Stocks, Stones, and Reptiles? From this Topick every Article of Idolatry appears most unreasonable and unnatural. For of these things the ordinary Understanding of Mankind, on hearing the Terms explained, is a competent Judge; to Men convinced of the Existence, and instructed in the Divine Nature, the Senses will discover innumerable Notices of such infinite Perfections, as cannot with any Propriety be attributed to another: Yet in this the Heathens erred; wherefore the Works of Creation were urged to them, as Lessons to furnish their Minds with Apprehensions more suitable to his Nature, than they had conceived.

So that this Argument does no Service to the Cause of Natural Theology, but to throw a Mist before the Eyes of unwary Readers: That the Creator's Name is written in Golden Characters on every Page of the Book of Nature; that the whole Universe is but a visible Map or Picture of the Invisible Deity; that we can no sooner open our Eyes, but we may behold the glorious Ideas of his Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; that Heaven and Earth are his Preachers; and that their Light, if duly followed, will direct and guide us to the Eternal one: That the Motions and Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, the Variety, Order, and Beauty of the Creatures, the Connexion and Correspondence of the whole System, according to the different Rank of Beings, suited to their several Capacities and Spheres; the Direction of all things to an End, and the fitting them with Parts and Instruments adapted best to the obtaining that End; and  
above

above all, the superior Formation of Man. These are all obvious to our Senses, and a visible Manifestation of some Self-originated and Eternal Cause, the Author of all others, and who alone can produce, govern, and uphold things, with that Power, Order, and Wisdom, which every one must observe in the Direction of the Universe.

Whence it is concluded, that there is a Natural Theology, or a Religion to be derived from Natural Principles; and that whoever do not attain such Knowledge, wilfully pervert their Reason, or darken, and by wicked Practices extinguish that Light, which God gave on purpose to make them know and worship him: And that they who do not, reduce themselves to a lower Condition of Stupidity than the Beasts that perish.

Yet how high soever Nature and Reason are magnified on these Occasions, there are few learned Writers on the Subject, who have not made such Concessions, as wholly enervate the Use of them; and, after seriously considering the Weakness and Limits of Human Understanding, are forced to confess with *Aristotle*, That it is disposed even towards first Beings, and those most manifest by Nature, just as Bats are towards the Light: And if such be the Condition of the Princes among Men in Wisdom, what can the rude and uninformed do? They who sit in the Land of Darkness and Shadow of Death, blinded with Sense, and dead in Lust and Sin; I may say Man in general, who is bid to go to the Pismire, to the Stork in the Heaven, to the Turtle, the Crane, and the Swallow, and even to the Lilies of the Field, for Instruction in Divine Knowledge.

When Man views the numberless Species of Creatures that are below him in Degrees of Perfection, he is apt to be exalted with his own Self-sufficiency: But when he looks upwards, and sees how much further he is removed from the Infinite Being of God; when



when he considers the Heavens, even the Work of his Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which he hath ordained, filled with Wonder at the Divine Wisdom and Mercy, and abashed at his own Ignorance and Weakness, is forced to cry out, *Lord! What is Man that thou art so mindful of him?*

We are told indeed of a Ladder, a Scale of Beings, by which the Understanding may ascend to God: And yet, alas! the first Step in this Ladder is beyond the Reach of our Strength and Capacities. Creative Omnipotence is the very Ground-work of these Contemplations, on which every Part depends, and from which alone the Mind can raise itself to larger Prospects and further Discoveries: Yet we have seen Creative Omnipotence, or what the Production or Emission of Matter into Being is, never entered into the Heart of Man to conceive; no Mage or wise Man ever thought of it; or if they had, they would have laughed at the Incredibility and Impossibility of such a Notion. If there was one, let us be told who he is; if there was not, Creation, or Created Beings, could not lead Men to the Knowledge of God; and the whole Structure erected on this Supposition, is without Justice, Foundation, or Truth. The first Link of this Chain that hangs down from Heaven, is out of View; and without this, all the rest are useless. A Creator without a Power to create, is to be, and not to be; and Contradictions will never teach the Truths of a Divine Nature. No Philosophy but that which is Divine, ever taught that God was the Efficient Cause of Matter, and nothing besides him, Eternal: And they who would ascend by a material Scale to the Divine Nature, speak as the Men at *Babel*: *Let us make Brick, and build a City and a Tower, whose Top may reach unto Heaven.* But such Attempts have always been confounded.

I am not therefore apprehensive of Danger or Error from this Conclusion : That through the whole Scriptures the Works of God are never so proposed, as that the World might, or did thereby find out God (for they neither found him nor knew him) but only that to those who are already acquainted with that great Truth, they are a sensible Evidence, the most noble Demonstration that can be offered, of his invisible Perfections, *even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

Then the stupendous Frame of the World, its Stability and Variety, the vast Orbs above, and the least Production below; in the smallest Insect, and every Flower in the Field, is a Psalm of Praise; since by the Greatness and Beauty of the Creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is seen. The Clemency of the Air, the Influence and Subsistence of the Elements, the Change of Times and Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness, all its Comforts and Benefits conspiring to the Good and Happiness of Man, make us bless that merciful Providence by which they are so steadily directed.

In this Sense, and no other, the vast Expansion of Heaven, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, their regular Motions, Course, and Order, teach and proclaim the infinitely great Author and wise Disposer of them. To this purpose does the Psalmist summon the *whole Creation, the Dragons, and all Deeps, Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Storms and Winds, Beasts, and all Cattle, creeping things and flying Fowl, to magnify him,* which they do by fulfilling his Word, performing his Pleasure, and obeying his Commands. And in thus answering the Ends for which he designed them, they silently praise him, and leave all rational Creatures without Excuse who do not the same.

Thus those memorable Words, *Psal. xix. The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth*

sheweth his Handywork, are undoubtedly true, to David who was a Friend of God, and to every religious Jew: For this Psalm was directed to the Chief Musician, to be sung in the Publick Assemblies, and intended purely for the Use of the Jewish Church. Day unto day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night sheweth Knowledge: There is no Speech nor Language where their Voice is not heard. Surely this Expression is figurative: But though they have neither Speech, nor Voice, nor Words, yet they have other and more effectual Ways of displaying the Divine Attributes; whereby they speak much louder, and direct Men to just Apprehensions of the Deity, more effectually than any Teacher on Earth can do. But if understood literally, as Declarers of the Existence of God, they must also be so understood, of a saving Faith in Christ; for thus they are directly applied by St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. which is proving too much; that being a Mystery hidden in God, which no created Being, much less the things which are seen, could possibly reveal.

The Gradation, which is here remarkable, fully explains both the Passages: *They cannot call on him, in whom they have not believed: Nor believe in him of whom they have not heard: Nor hear without a Preacher: Nor one be a Preacher, except he be sent. So Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yea verily, their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.* Here is noted the Impossibility to have Faith, or a Belief in God, without Instruction; and the only Means of Instruction is the Word of God, and not the Voice of his Works, which never could discover him, but are a noble Attestation of him when revealed.

And this he applies to the *Gentiles*, and repeats a Prophecy of *Is. lxxv. 1.* concerning the Call of them: *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found*

*The Knowledge of Divine Things from*  
*found of them that sought me not ; I was made mani-*  
*fest unto them that asked not after me.* The Heathens  
 neither knew God, nor asked, nor enquired after  
 him : But when the Time of their Calling to the  
 Church was come, he would send Preachers to instruct  
 them in whom to believe, and extend to them  
 the only Means of saving Knowledge, the Word and  
 Will of God.

Or if it be understood of spreading the Gospel by  
 the Ministry of the Apostles, that it was preached  
 to every Creature under Heaven ; then it enforces  
 the Necessity of Instruction, and consequently could  
 not be applicable by *St. Paul* in a Sense directly con-  
 trary to the Psalmist, since both wrote by the Guid-  
 ance of the same unerring Spirit. And herein there is  
 no Difference between the *Jew* and the *Greek* ; but the  
*same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

Such are the usual Forms of Speech with the  
 inspired Writers, to express an universal Ac-  
 knowledgment of God's Dominion and Praise ;  
*The Heavens shall praise thy Wonders, O Lord, Psal.*  
*lxxxix. 5. And the Heavens declare his Righteous-*  
*ness, for God is Judge himself. Hear O my People,*  
*and I will speak, Psal. l. 6.* Yet it never was imagined,  
 that they instructed the World in a future Judg-  
 ment ; which however, by this Method of inter-  
 preting, would be as legible in the Book of Na-  
 ture, as the Divine Existence : And such Summons  
 of the Works of God are the constant Language  
 of the Prophets. *Hear, O Heaven, and give ear,*  
*O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, Isaiah i. 9.*  
*And the Beasts of the Field, the Dragons and the*  
*Owls shall honour me, Isaiah xliii. 20.* Yet as God  
 intended nothing in vain, if these by his Appoint-  
 ment were the Teachers of Divine Truths, all  
 the rational Creatures of God would have been in-  
 structed in them, or the Means had not answered  
 the End : Which is so far from being true, that  
 all

all (except the *Jews*) were ignorant of him : And therefore the Author of Nature never determined them to such Purposes.

Nay, they always had an opposite Effect, which is no way reconcilable with the Measures of Providence, that its Works should regularly produce Effects quite contrary to the Purposes of their Creation : Yet so it was, those Works which the present Age says lead the World to God, always led them to the grossest Idolatry. No sooner did Human Wisdom receive the least Advancement, but its Contemplations were directed to the Study of the Heavenly Bodies, their Beauty, Order, Motion, Influence and Government : But Men were so far struck with Admiration, that they stopped here ; acquiesced in the apparent Wisdom and Power they observed in visible Objects, without ever enquiring for an Efficient Cause ; first neglected, and then rejected the Notion of a Creator, as a Being unknown and invisible to their carnal Minds.

And from such Admiration of their excellent Glory, stupendous Frame, beautiful Structure, regular Order, and powerful Influence, they immediately began to call and think the Sun, Moon, and Host of Heaven to be God ; fell down in Adoration, and made them the ultimate Object of their Worship, their *Uranus*, their *Jupiter*, their most High. It was this first Study of Philosophy or worldly Wisdom, that removed the Fences of true Religion, and let in an Inundation of Idolatry upon the Reason and Minds of Men. These were the early Gods of *Chaldea* and *Egypt* ; so vain are the Imaginations of Man when he relies upon himself. Their boasted Knowledge in Astronomy was so far from directing their Minds, by a Consideration of visible Beings, to an Acknowledgment of the invisible Glories of the Godhead, that it for ever shut out such serious Thoughts, in ascribing the Glory of the Uncreated

God to Created Nature ; and became the Ground-work of Impiety, Polytheism, and Atheism, to all succeeding Ages.

And I think this Argument wants no other Confutation than the Manner in which it is urged by those very Persons, who introduced it as a Support of the Law of Nature. *Natalis Comes* says, “ That  
 Mythol. 1. 1. c. 7. p. 10. “ there were no Nations, however barbarous, that  
 “ did not think there were Gods, that the World  
 “ was created and governed by a Providence ; yet  
 “ few were so hardy as to introduce any Gods but  
 “ what they received from others.” That they believed the World created (or *non fortuito genitum*) is too false to deserve an Answer : Or what was the Consequence of their believing Creation, and a Providence? Why, not to have Apprehensions of one God, or admit any but what they received from others ; and so they worshipped the first Star, Stock or Stone, they found their ignorant Neighbours adored. And in a few Lines after he adds, “ That almost all People and Nations  
 “ first agreed in this Opinion, *To look upon the Heavenly Bodies as Gods.*” Lord *Herbert* agrees in the same, that they first worshipped the Stars ; but  
 Relig. Gent. 1. 1. c. 2. p. 11. affirms, that this led them to the Knowledge of the Supreme God. By which Rule, Falshood is the Road to Truth ; and Idolatry, or worshipping false Gods, is the School for Men to learn the true One. Surely a Cause must be weak, if not desperate, that stands in need of such Arguments.

But all this is an utter Degradation of the Deity, and impossible to happen, were there any Mark, Idea, or Signature of God set upon his Works : And in such case, the World, learning under one and the same Master, would certainly agree in some common Notions and Apprehensions of him. Yet go among any People, and you will find the Notions they have of a Supreme Being, to be no more  
 than

than the bare Opinion of their Teacher, without any Resemblance of the true God ; which were impossible, if these were the Characters whereby he would manifest himself.

If indeed there be any Symbols of the Deity more beautiful or eloquent than others ; any visible Objects more amazing than the rest, to fill our Apprehensions with Awe and Dignity ; they undoubtedly are the two great Luminaries appointed under him to rule the Day and Night. When the Sun goeth forth in his full Strength to run his Course, if any thing could lead our Thoughts upwards to a brighter and more glorious Being, that must : It is the nearest Representation, among material things, of the Bounty and Blessings of our great Creator ; and has hence been stiled *the Prince of Heaven, the King and Father, the Leader and the Guide of Nature, the Director of Seasons and of Times* ; it extends its Influence to every Creature, is Light to some, and Life to all, dividing its Use and Service to all Nations under Heaven ; whereby we behold the Beauties of the lower World, and enjoy its Blessings with Pleasure and Comfort.

For these Reasons did vain Men lift up their Eyes, and fix their Affections there : To this King and Queen of Heaven did they bow, pay Divine Worship, and religiously invoke them for their Protection and Assistance, as the sole Authors and Dispensers of Good to Mankind. And it is in vain to say, that they worshipped a Supreme Being, in, by, or through these, either as Emblems or Mediators. *Plato* expressly says, that the *Greeks* had no other Gods but the Sun, Moon, Stars, &c. They neither believed nor imagined any thing to be superior to them ; and for starting the least Objection against it, *Anaxagoras* was charged with Impiety and Atheism, and *Socrates* pursued to Death.

The very *Jews*, amidst a watchful Providence, awakened by Miracles, and warned by constant Teachers from God against this very Abomination, frequently fell under the Temptation, and served the Sun, Moon, and Stars, even all the Host of Heaven: And if they proved a Stumbling-Block and a Snare to the chosen People of God, there can be but little Hopes of their proving Guides to direct others to an adequate Knowledge of him.

Wisd. xiii.

1.

And so the *Jews* confess: *Surely vain are all Men by Nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen, know him that is; neither by considering the Works did they acknowledge the Workmaster, but deemed either Fire, &c. or the Lights of Heaven, to be the Gods which govern the World.* Whence we learn the Opinion of the *Jews* to be,  
 1. That the Heathens were ignorant, or knew nothing of the true God. 2. That the Works of Creation never led them to the Creator. 3. That they never could raise their Minds, in Contemplation of a Deity, above the Sphere of visible Things; but concluded them to be truly and essentially God, since nothing that was not so, could govern the World.

Nor did the Heathens ever imagine, that what they knew of the Existence of the Gods was taught them by Nature. *Plato* always ascribes it to a divine Communication, that it is Θεῶν ἐκ ἀνθρώπων δόξαι, *the Gift of the Gods to Men.* And in his *Theages*, That they give it to none but such as are their Friends; therefore not indiscriminately to all who behold the Heavens; and more than once draws an Analogy and Similitude betwixt the Light of the Sun and the Knowledge of God: That as the Eye cannot contemplate the Sun but by its own Light; so neither can the Mind contemplate the τὸ ἄνθρωπίνου, without some Idea or Beam of this chiefest Good: Which (he adds) is the Cause of all Truth, in every intelligent

Phileb.

Rep. 6.  
p. 483.



intelligent Faculty, without which there is no Science.

And the Comparison is just; for the Mind knows intellectual things, as the Eye does visible ones, by the Interposition of a proper Agent and due Light: What therefore the Sun is in visible things, tho' neither the Sight nor Eye; yet the Cause of the Eye's seeing, the Discernment of sensible things, and of himself being visible: So is God in Intellectuals, neither the human Mind, nor Reason, nor Understanding; yet is the immediate sole Cause of all spiritual Knowledge to Man; that ineffable Light, which only can open his Mind to contemplate the invisible Glories of the Divine Nature.

If the Sun could not be perceived but by the Light it affords, much less could God (that *νοητὸν γνωσεως φῶς, κ' φῶς ἀληθινόν, κ' φῶς τῶ κόσμου, κ' φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων*) to whom the Glory of the heavenly Orbs is no more to be compared than a Glow-worm, or Spark of Fire to them: They enlighten the visible World, but reach not the internal Mind; they are material, subject to Corruption and Vanity, and cannot declare an immaterial incorruptible Nature.

*Menander* spoke well as an Heathen: "That we ought to worship the Sun as the principal God, because by him we see the other Gods." And certainly that God, which is a Sun to the Soul, irradiating the inward Recesses and Eyes of the Mind, opening to it the Treasures of Knowledge, ought only to be adored.

Only look at the Sun stedfastly, and it will dazzle or blind: And if the Natural Eye cannot bear those material Rays, what Hope can there be of its beholding the Emanations of that Glory, *which no Man can see and live?* There are but two Images of God propounded to Mortals, by which the Mind is raised to invisible things, and those are *Nature* and *Grace*, the *Works* and *Word of God*. He is shewn in them

both, but in both not understood ; Nature explains, but points not out her Creator ; she cannot enlighten the intellectual Eye : The Word and Will of God are the only Light that can open the Eyes of the Blind, and teach them, through the other, a full Acknowledgment of the Truth.

For God is, and must be his own Revealer ; Matter and Motion only declare his Being, as the Herald does a King by proclaiming his August Titles. When his Existence and Perfections are manifested, they attest the Truth of the one, and the exceeding Greatness of the other.

Tell Men there is a God, and their Mind embraces it as a necessary Truth ; unfold his Attributes, and they will see the Explanation of them in his Works. When the Foundation is laid sure and firm, that there is a God, and his Will the Cause of all things, nothing made but by his special Appointment and Command ; then the Order of Beings will fill their Minds with a due Sense of the Divine Majesty, and they may be made a Scale to raise juster Conceptions of what is Immortal and Invisible. Every thing around us, or that has any Relation to us, will be Helps to the better Discernment of things not seen.

Then it will be no light Curiosity, but a most improving Lecture to contemplate the excellent Fabrick of the Heavens, the Splendours of the upper Firmament, the Harmony of the Stars, the Glory of the Sun, the Brightness of Light, the Vicissitude of Nights and Days, the monthly Courses of the Moon, the Seasons of the Year, the Nature of the Elements, the vegetable Power of Seeds, the infinite Number and Kinds of Animals, preserving their proper Species ; the Magnitude and Grandeur of the Universe, its exquisite Contrivance and Proportions, the Variety of Materials, the admirable Disposition of the Whole, the Regularity of the Design, the Agree-

Agreement and Consent of every Part conspiring to one and the same End. These, and a thousand other Observations, will give new Light and Strength to prove they must be the Work of an Intelligent Mind; and become proper Motives to adore the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of that blessed Being, who is the Director and Preserver of them.

In this Sense, and no other, can Nature be called a School or a Mistress leading to God; and so did the wisest Heathens express themselves. *Zaleucus*, in the Preface to his *Laws*, argues in this manner:

“ Every Inhabitant should first be persuaded of the Being and Existence of the Gods; which he will readily be induced to entertain, when he contemplates the Heavens, regards the World, and observes the Disposition, Order, and Harmony of the Universe, &c.”

Vid. Sto-  
baum, Ser.  
42.

This is a just and noble Thought of that ancient Lawgiver: He makes the Belief of the Gods the Foundation of Society and Law, what therefore every Member of the Community should be well instructed in; and that if in any be found a Spirit of Ignorance or Infidelity, the due Consideration of the System of the Universe is such a convincing Motive, as must soon induce them to an Acknowledgment of it.

*Cicero* has a remarkable Passage to this purpose, wherein he introduces *Aristotle* thus stating the Argument: “ If we could suppose some Persons to have lived in the Bowels of the Earth, with all the Riches, Magnificence, and Pleasure, that in our Opinion make Men happy; yet had never been on the Surface of the World, but by Hearsay and Report were informed, that there was an Infinite Power and Being; and that afterwards, by an Opening of the Earth, they could come from those hidden Dwellings into these habitable Parts where we are, and should on a sudden behold the

Nat. D.  
l. 2. n. 37.  
in fin.

“ Earth, the Sea, and Heavens, should observe the  
 “ Bigness of the Clouds, the Force of Winds, the  
 “ Vastness, Beauty, and Influence of the Sun, that he  
 “ caused Day by an Expansion of Light through  
 “ the Firmament: And when Darkness covered the  
 “ Earth, should behold the Heavens enamelled  
 “ with Stars, the Variety of Lights in the Moon,  
 “ in its Wanes, Increase and Full, with the Ris-  
 “ ing and Setting, the fixed and immoveable  
 “ Courses of them all. When they saw these things,  
 “ they could not but acknowledge there was a Deity,  
 “ and that these mighty Works were the Effects of  
 “ his Power.”

Undoubtedly true! First acquaint Men that there is a God (which is the very Foundation of the Argument) and then the Works of Nature are a most convincing Testimony to confirm the Truth both of his Existence and Greatness; and in this Sense they are applied by the wisest of Philosophers.

The Inferences therefore drawn from the Works of Creation, by the present Maintainers of the Law of Nature, are unjust; being directly contrary (and that by their own Confession) to what the ancient Heathens made: For they not being able to discern the Cause superior to all others, the Will of God, never could find out that God created the Universe; but vainly attributed it to other Causes; to Fate, in which there is no Variety; to the Confusion of Chance, in which there is no Beauty or Usefulness; to an everlasting Continuance, which excludes God from the World; to a Concourse of Atoms, which is full of ungeometrical Absurdities, in making Matter, senseless and unactive Particles, to be Self-existent and Self-moving: Whereas the least Knowledge of Nature might have informed them that Matter cannot act; that Nature, Fate, or Chance, are no real Beings or Agents; that what itself has no Substance, cannot be truly the Cause  
of

Vid. Dr.  
 Clarke  
 Sermon, vol.  
 1. p. 54.

of any Thing: But if they were not able to find out this first Principle, that all things were the Productions of Divine Will and Power, it is absurd to say, that they could through these Works discover a Deity, being utterly ignorant of the Relation that was betwixt them.

And what was no natural Principle, whereby the wise Men of old could come at the Knowledge of God and Duty, cannot be so to the rest of the World: and that they did not look upon this as a Means to attain them, appears from *Socrates*: “ That they  
 “ who were anxiously enquiring into the Laws by  
 “ which the heavenly Motions were guided, were  
 “ no better than Madmen, in fixing their Minds  
 “ on Studies so far above human Attainment, and  
 “ what no mortal Mind can reach, and neglecting  
 “ that which most concerned themselves.” He  
 surely therefore could not think the Study of Nature, that, which primarily must lead the World to Virtue or the Gods.

Vid.  
 Euseb.  
 Præp. l.  
 15. c. 62.

Finities, though never so multiplied, cannot rise up to the Knowledge of Infinite: And thousands of *Aristotles* or *Newtons* would be as unequal to the Task, as the Herdsman is to the Metaphysical Depths of the former, or the abstracted Calculations of the latter; because all human Science is here at an End. And those wretchedly mistaken and profane Assertions the Heathens constantly uttered concerning the Divine Nature, may convince us, how insufficient the Study of Nature with unassisted Reason is for these Things, and ought to direct us to a better Light than they are able to afford.

And if it be asked, why created Beings cannot manifest the uncreated one? It is sufficient to say there is no Proportion between them. We could not from beholding a Glow-worm form any Notion of the Sun; and yet the Creator excels the Creature ten thousand times more, than the Brightness

ness of the Sun, in its utmost Strength, does the dimmest Speck of Light: And it is an absolute Impossibility for Reason, naked and ignorant of such a Being, by any Propriety, or even Rules of Analogy, to form the least Thought, Idea, Notion, Term, or Definition of his Nature: Whatever we behold, has no Likeness or Resemblance to him. Ascend as high as we please, there is an infinite Void between the most excellent Effect and the efficient Cause; a passive created Being, and an active creating Will. It is sufficient to say, that *his* Nature is so, and so is *ours*; and that to go beyond the Power of our Nature is a Contradiction. There is a Gulph between Finite and Infinite where all Notices stop; a Voice in Heaven that does not descend, without God utter it; a first Cause, whose Nature no secondary one can manifest, except he vouchsafe to reveal himself.

The *Second* Means, in the Works of Creation, whereby the Teachers of Natural Religion say, every Man is able to infer the Necessity of a Supreme Being, a Providence, the Soul's Immortality, and all those great Articles which depend upon, and are consequential to, the Existence of a Deity, is a serious Contemplation of his own Frame and Being.

We must imagine the first Thoughts of Men, employed in considering the Objects nearest to them, and which afford them Sustenance and Pleasure; the Variety and Vegetation of Fruits; the Texture, Growth, and Virtues of Plants, Shrubs, and Trees; the Structure, Instinct, or Sagacity of Animals; the Diversity of Organs for Life and Aliment, in their several Elements; the curious Mechanism of every Member, the Eye, the Ear, &c. the Glands, Fibres, Muscles, and every Part best adapted to those Actions, wherein the Preservation of their Being seems chiefly to consist: As also the various  
Appear-

Appearances of Life, Sense, or Motion, the Qualities and Powers most observable in them.

But when Man would know the Causes of these Things, what the Essence is which constitutes them, what they are ; or on what depends their different Properties and Operations, he must put an End to his Studies: He visibly perceives that thus Things are, but why, or how, he can never understand. Every Spire of Grass, every Pebble must nonplus this Man of Reason ; by what Alembick those pure Streams are raised that feed and animate the one ; or by what Cohesion the Particles of the other are reduced to their Firmness and Solidity.

This, one would think, should damp his Hopes of ever comprehending the Substances or Operations of nobler Beings, when he cannot find out the Contrivances or Cause of the meanest Object ; and the further he advances, the more strongly must he be convinced of the Narrowness of his Mind, the Obscurity of Things, the Impossibility of accounting for the Secrets of Nature, which are, and must for ever be hid from him.

But as the most useful Study is to know ourselves, it is reasonable to believe every Person more desirous of being acquainted with his own Being, than any other. Here the first Observations he must make, are the Motion of the Heart, the Beating of the Pulse, the Digestion of Nutriment, Motion, Perspiration, and other involuntary Acts, (though, as they depend not on his Will, they are not cognizable by his Understanding) but especially the internal Operations of his Mind, in Thought, Consciousness, Reflection, &c. From these Principles it is affirmed, that a Man may naturally know he consists of Soul and Body : For (say they) Matter being senseless, cannot live alone, nor move itself, but must receive both Life and Motion from the Soul.

But

But this is begging the Question, and is so far from being obvious to unassisted Reason; that we may with as much Justice affirm it to be impossible for the Natural Man to discover the specifick Difference of the Parts which constitute him.

There can no Reason be assigned, why he should imagine himself a compounded Being, and not rather look upon his whole Frame to be so modified and organized, as to occasion those Thoughts or Motions he observes in himself, since they are inseparable, never act asunder, and could scarce ever become different Objects of his Contemplation. Or had he raised some abstracted Arguments, to prove that Reasoning, Volition, &c. are Operations of a Substance invisible to him, and whose Manner of Existence he can no way comprehend; yet one sound Sleep, when his whole Nature is without any of these Acts, will for ever destroy the Notion of a pure thinking Substance within him; Experience convinces him of the Contrary, that when the Operations of his Body rest, so do those of the Soul. Nay, the Body breathes, and is in Motion, when the other Part is in a State of Death; so far from Reasoning, that it does not think, all its Impressions and Ideas are quite obliterated; yet it is waked with the Body, and the Perception being at all times but one Act, and of the whole Man; he could never imagine himself compounded of Parts so different, and remote from each other; especially since with the most elevated Speculations, he could not discern, or form the least Idea, how a Spirit can modify, act upon, or govern Matter, or how they can be vitally united together.

That this is no unreasonable Supposition, appears from *Cicero's* Character of the *Britons*, though in that Age the Teachers of Religion to the Western World, "Do but carry among them or the *Scythians*, says he, *Possidonius's* Sphere, which shews  
 " the



“ the Revolutions, the Sun, Moon, and Planets  
“ make both Night and Day in the Heavens ; and  
“ not one of the Barbarians would doubt, but that  
“ it was a Creature endued with perfect Reason.”  
With much greater Reason might Man be no more than a well contrived Machine of one and the same Materials, in the Opinion of Mankind.

But however, we must for Argument's sake suppose these Persons, after having accurately studied natural Things, proceed to those which are purely intellectual ; raise the Mind above the Verge of Sense and Matter to pure Acts of the Understanding, and contemplate the abstracted Views of corporeal and incorporeal Beings, their Substances, essential Properties, Accidents, Relations, and Oppositions, and whatsoever may be conceived by Abstraction from Matter ; and lay down such sure Principles and exact Methods that the Contemplator may trace Things to their first Origin and Cause : That he may not investigate Truth, but know it when he finds it, in being able to assign the Reasons of it, and the Marks whereby he can distinguish it from Error and Falshood : For without this, all his Knowledge would be superficial and defective, and his Judgment ever at a loss, where to doubt, or where to acquiesce. Besides, all these Metaphysical Speculations are so remote from Sense and Matter, proceed in Paths so entirely unfrequented and unknown ; the Certainty of the Principles so abstracted and intricate, and every Step full of Dispute and Doubt, Obscurity and Perplexity, that if he did not judge this to be an Exercise above the Strength of his Mind ; yet he must go on with Fear and Diffidence, like Travellers in the midst of Precipices and Danger.

Where then must the Inquirer fix his Foot in this new World ; by what abstracted Clue and Method of Reasoning must he search for Demonstrations to judge of Immateriality ; to discover the  
Essence,

Essence, Operations and Acts of Substances separate from Body, and obtain a Discernment of aerial subtle Spirits and Intelligences? Where he has no Guide but his Senses, nor can possibly believe what is contrary to them; every thing he feels, or hears, or sees, is a full Conviction to the contrary.

To all which a short Answer may suffice. The whole is an Impossibility. For as an uninstructed Person could have no Inlet or Conveyance of Knowledge, but by Sensation, and nothing is evident to the Senses but Matter; he never could produce Immateriality out of it: Nothing can be made out of Materials, but what such Materials afford; divide, compare, reflect, abstract as long as you please; nothing can be made otherwise by Ideas of sensible Objects; he may indeed form some *Entia Rationis*, Centaurs, or Monsters, by placing different and remote Objects together; but that will never alter the Nature of things, nor any internal Operations or Powers abstract what is spiritual from that which is altogether corporeal.

Can any of our Moderns form a right or positive Idea of what is above Body, or of any thing that is not Body? No one can do it whilst so strictly united to the Body. The Dependence on the Senses, that so much confine and obscure the Light of our Understanding, hinders us from it; or if (for Supposition's sake) he could plainly perceive, that the internal Operations of Thought, Reasoning, and Reflexions are of so high and noble a Nature, that they must needs proceed from something above all that is body or corporeal, because they infinitely surpass the Reach and Force of it: Yet he never could pretend to make a true and positive Idea of that Principle which is the Cause of it. Though, I say, he concluded it to be something far more noble than all that is in the rank  
of

of Bodies, yet could he never determine what its Being or Nature might be.

Or if he endeavoured to penetrate into himself, and search into what he is, and what he does; what is this reasoning Power that is within me? what are these Thoughts, these Ratiocinations, and those Reflexions I make upon my self and my Operations? Why, or how he thinks; if nothing rises, or has a beginning of it self, whence things come, or from what Cause or Motion they proceed? Before he can any way infer the Necessity of the Instrument of Thought's being immaterial, he must know what the essential Attributes of Body and Spirits are, and clearly understand what Motion, Action, Life, Self-activity, Cogitation, Intellection, Volition, internal Energy, Penetration, Indivisibility, and Extension mean; as also what the Modes and Accidents of a Substance are.

He must then discover the Principle and Root of Life and Cogitation, what is essentially Vital and Intellectual, what not; which the true and only Cause of Thought, that it cannot proceed from any Composition of Matter; Life and Thought not being Accidents, but substantial things: He must distinguish the Limits between Sense and Perception, Thinking and Self-consciousness, Soul, Mind, and Understanding, with the Difference of their several Powers and Operations; he must reconcile Immateriality and Substantiality together, with numberless other abstract Ideas, before he can have any adequate Conception of the Soul.

Nor after all this, could he fix a Judgment of its Immateriality: If it be said, no Principle can be more evident than this, that no Mechanism, Matter, or Motion however modified, can produce Life or Thought; and so Thinking is a Proof of the Soul: It will prove indeed that most Men are without a Soul the greatest part of their Lives;  
but

L. 4. c. 3. but if we believe Mr. *Locke*, there is no such Evidence  
 §. 6. P. in that Proposition; nor is it any Contradiction to  
 323. suppose that the first eternal thinking Being, or  
 omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleased, give to  
 certain Systems of created senseless Matter, put to-  
 gether as he thinks fit, some Degrees of Sense,  
 Perception, and Thought.

Or if we define the Soul to be a thinking Being,  
 that may distinguish it from other Bodies; but no  
 way proves it void of something like to Matter,  
 nor of Extension: nor can they prove the Impos-  
 sibility of Thought and Extension to subsist in the  
 same thing; for we cannot conceive how any thing  
 but impulse of Body, can move Body: How  
 Thought and Will can give a Determination to  
 Matter: If we can, let it be explained, and made  
 intelligible; if we cannot, it will be impossible to  
 understand how an immaterial Soul can move a  
 dead senseless Body; or even to conceive how Mat-  
 ter should at first have been created by an imma-  
 terial Mind; and without a thorow Conception  
 of it, neither the Soul, nor any Works of Crea-  
 tion could lead us up to God.

Or if the Soul be only Consciousness and Thought,  
*cogitandi actus*, then when it ceases to think, as in  
 sound Sleep, it will cease to be; or if it be abso-  
 lutely immaterial, and nothing but *actus cogitans*,  
 it could not be affected by material Things, nor  
 could the Objects of Sense make any Impression on  
 it. When a visible Thing presents itself to the  
 Eye, or Sounds to the Ear, that could not be the  
 Cause that the Soul judges it hears or sees. And  
 they who maintain the Soul's Immateriality, con-  
 fess themselves ignorant how to account for it. And  
 if we do not understand the Operations of our  
 own finite Mind, let it not seem strange that we  
 cannot comprehend the Operations of that eternal  
 infinite Mind, who made and governs all things.

Nor

Nor is this to be wondered at, since they who have most exercised their Thoughts on this Subject, have been forced to acknowledge, that our Faculties cannot arrive at a demonstrative Certainty about the Immateriality of the Soul. It seems to be a Point out of the reach of our Knowledge; and he who will give himself the liberty to consider freely, and look into the dark and intricate part of each Hypothesis, will scarce find his Reason able to determine him fixedly, for or against the Soul's Immateriality, since on which side soever he views it, either as an unextended Substance, or as a thinking extended Matter; the Difficulty to conceive either, whilst either is alone in his Thoughts, still drives him to the contrary Side: Both Opinions are to us inexplicable, beyond our Comprehension. They who will have every thing submit to Reason, must be *Cartesians* in this Article, whose Philosophy does not advance Thought and Spirit above the Pitch of external Sense, and goes no higher than the Body, to explain the most refined and exalted Operations of the Soul.

And if the Immateriality of the Soul be thus difficult to be proved from Nature, much more so must its Immortality, and subsisting in a separate State, as so wholly depending on the former; and whether it can be solidly proved from Reason, ought to be doubted, since hitherto it has not been done: Nor is it possible for Nature to teach more, than that though the Body perishes, there is no actual Necessity that the Soul perish also; but no un-instructed Person, from Observations on the Death of Animals or of Men, could have the least ground to imagine a separate Subsistence of any part of them: He sees Life extinguished, the whole Man perish, and all Operations cease; and thence to infer, that some part of them survives, lives, and

Z

operates,

Vid.  
Locke Ib.  
& p. 324.

operates, would be a most absurd and vain Consequence.

Vid. Cudworth  
Intellect.  
Syst. c. 5.  
p. 868.

But why should we imagine this of Reason unimproved, when the greatest Masters of improved Reason allow, that when they say the Immortality of the human Soul is demonstrable by natural Reason, the Meaning thereof is no more than this, that its Substantiality is demonstrable; from whence it follows, that it will naturally no more perish, or vanish into nothing than the Substance of Matter it self; and not that it is impossible, either for it, or Matter, by divine Power to be annihilated. Wherefore the Assurance we have of our own Souls Immortality, must depend upon something else besides their Substantiality; namely, a Faith also in the Divine Goodness, that he will conserve in being, or not annihilate all such Substances created by him; whose permanent Subsistence is neither inconsistent with his own Attributes, nor the Good of the Universe; as this of rational Souls unquestionably is not, they having both Morality and Liberty of Will, therefore capable of Rewards and Punishments, and consequently fit Objects for the divine Justice to display it self upon.

The Argument therefore of Natural Religion stands thus: The Operations and Immortality of the Soul are a Means to lead the World to God; but of its Immortality they could have no Assurance without Faith in the Divine Goodness, which by the very Supposition (as this is a Means to bring them to it) they must be ignorant of; therefore what they are ignorant of, cannot lead them to God. On the other hand, that which we could have no Assurance of without Faith in the Divine Goodness, could never lead us to a Knowledge of the Divine Existence and Perfections, because on a Conviction of these depends our Assurance of the other,

other, and the latter cannot be antecedent to the former.

Whence we may conclude that Man of himself could never have known the immaterial, spiritual, impassible Nature of the Soul; but that like other divine Truths, whenever it is discovered, it appears in the highest manner agreeable to the Expectations and Wishes of a rational Creature, and disposes him to more exalted Acts of Gratitude and Adoration towards the incorporeal Maker of his Being.

Another Contemplation, that would elude the sublimest Efforts of the Man of Reason in a State of Nature, is, that though he had discovered a separate Being within himself from the Body; yet he never could find out any specifick Difference between his own Soul, and that of other Animals, and must therefore conclude both or neither to be Immortal. As it would be of no moral Service to him to know he has a Soul, which neither in Original nor Excellency is above the Beasts that perish; and as he sees both alike rot after Death, it is most reasonable to imagine his Conclusion would be, that Death puts an end to both their Beings.

Nor must we rank the Knowledge of this Difference in Souls among natural and common Truths; for if Brutes have not Reason, they have something so like it, and make approaches so near to it, that no Philosophy has been able to fix the Boundaries between Souls, any further than by mere Guess and Opinion. What constitutes the Souls of Beasts? what Degrees of Reason they are capable of? whether they are only Automata, organized Machines, Modifications of Matter, or spiritual Substances? These are Questions which have exercised the Schools and Wits of every Age, yet lie as far as ever from being decided.

It falls under the Observation of every one, that the Souls of Beasts have Sense, therefore must be nobler than the Body ; that among the Objects of all their Senses they judge some agreeable, others prejudicial, therefore desire one, and avoid the other ; that they remember what is past, as Correction or Encouragement, reflect thereon, and draw some kind of Consequences to direct their future Actions. And how can Reflexion be without Thought, or Thought without Knowledge, or Knowledge without Reason, or Reason without Immateriality ? These Passions and Acts proceed from the Soul, whose Desires are the Cause of them ; and yet Matter, however subtile or refined, is incapable of Thought or Reflexion : Hence Experience and Example confound and render the thing inexplicable.

Let it be shewn, wherein the Difference of them consists ; if it be that they reason less perfectly than Men, so do Children and Lunaticks : Or if this proceeds from the Fault of the Organs, so it may in them. It is evident that they are not mere Machines, nor can material Principles effect what we every Day observe in them ; it is impossible to deny them some Degrees of Thought or Reason, and admitting the least Degree, we know not where to stop, why that which is capable of some Reason should not be of more, or how to assign the true Occasion of it ; and hence none agree in the Measures of their Sense or Reason, or in the Nature and Operations of their Soul.

Nat. D. Most of the Ancients thought that Beasts were  
 l. 3. n. 9. rational. Cicero says, “ That in a Pismire there is  
 “ Reason, Mind, and Memory.” They also believed their Souls to be part of the Soul of the World, as Virgil calls that of Bees. *Partem Divinae mentis*, and to return to it after Death,



————— *viva volare*

*Sideris in numerum, atque alto succedere cælo.*

That their Reason was the same, and in common with Men, some enjoying it in a greater, others in a less Degree: And all the Philosophers who believed Transmigration, were obliged to acknowledge the Souls of Beasts and Men to be the very same; as others not knowing where to stop, attributed to them social Virtues, the Knowledge of Religion and of God. *Pbilo* wrote a Book on this Subject, that Brute Animals are endued with Reason. Euseb. Hist. Ecl. l. 2. c. 18.

*Salmasius*, *Locke* and others cannot but allow that Beasts have Reason; and Mr. *Locke* would make the Distinction between theirs and Mens, to consist in this, that Brutes have only particular but no abstracted general Ideas: And some in the fury of Philosophy, not finding a Solution for these things in the general Laws of Motion, observing little Difference betwixt the Disguise of Reason in an Ape, or a Clown, have pronounced the Souls of Beasts by Nature immortal as the Souls of Men; for if they are not material, why should they be mortal? if they do not subsist after Death, it is not owing to any Imperfection in them, but to the Will of him that created them,

Nay many learned and pious Men have asserted their Immateriality and Subsistence after Death. The great Dr. *Henry More* believed they subsisted out of the Body, and thinks it probable enough that they continue to live in that State, but dares not affirm it; only alledging what may be said on both sides the Question.

On the other hand, the *Cartesians* make Beasts perfect Automata, hold it a kind of Impiety to allow their Souls capable of any Knowledge, as what would at once destroy all the natural Proofs we

have of our own Souls Immortality. And the Maintainers of Natural Religion think it a dangerous Opinion, because we could not then be assured of it but by Revelation ; which, though the Truth, rather than allow, they will perplex themselves with inextricable Difficulties.

The only Inference I shall draw, is this : That if there be so much Difficulty to distinguish between Spiritual and Corporeal Beings, to find out the Nature of a Rational Soul, with those Properties which distinguish it from others, and that the most improved Reason has but such an imperfect View of these things ; it would be a vain Attempt for a Natural Man to compass the Knowledge of what his Soul was ; and much more so, from any Notices he could attain, to rise higher in the Scale of Spiritual Beings, to the puissant Host of Heaven, and from them to the Father of Spirits and Men, the All-glorious and Invisible God.

But I must add, that if the Philosophers did not discover these Truths, they cannot be Parts of Natural Religion : Yet *Parmenides*, *Empedocles*, *Democritus*, *Anaxagoras*, and others, taught the Souls of Beasts to be rational ; *Strato* and *Ænesidemus*, that Sense could not subsist without Understanding ; *Sextus Empiricus*, that no Animal is void of Reason, but that all are capable of Knowledge and Understanding. *Pliny* makes Religion one of the Moral Virtues of Elephants ; and *Xenocrates* affirmed, that Beasts have a Religion, and know God ; and the *Platonists* (according to *Dion*, L. 39.) seem to have held the Souls of Brutes to be immortal.

And with regard to the Soul of Man in particular, there never was a Philosopher in the World who thought it void of a Body ; the most and the wisest of them thought it Elementary and Corporeal ; and *Galen*, that admirable Physician, that it was only a Temperament of the Body ; though at other

L. 8. c. 1  
Init.

L. 3. de  
locis affectis,  
c. 6.

other times he confesses his Ignorance of it, and that he had not sufficiently discovered its Nature. *Aristippus* said, we are all Body; and *Zeno*, all Mind. And the greatest of them, who had been taught they had a Soul, and that it was immortal, never could discover any certain Truth concerning its Nature or Operations; but universally fell into two Extremes, both of them wicked and absurd: The one exalted Man into the Place of God, by making his Soul a Part of the Divinity; which is still maintained by the *Cabalists* of *Persia*, and the *Brachmans* of *India*. Others degraded him to the Beasts, by holding there was nothing in the Universe or Man, but Atoms, Matter, and local Motion: So that all the Operations of the Mind must be the Effects of dead insensible Body, without Judgment, without Reason; or, what little mends the Hypothesis, of some subtile Matter, Fire, Wind, or Air, the Particles of which, however fine or small, or nimble in their Texture or Disposition, will still be Body; and Thought, Invention, Meditation, &c. be only the Result and Motion of an artificial Engine.

But the first Stumbling-Block to the ancient Philosophers, and what no one could get over, was, to conceive an Incorporeity, any thing entirely void of Matter; without a proper Notion of which, all further Proof, or even Thoughts about the Soul, must be at an end, or altogether vain and imaginary.

The perpetual Difficulties that occurred on these Subjects, made some, as *Democritus*, deny there were any Spiritual Beings; and *Aristotle*, any more than those which moved the Heavenly Bodies, without which he could not account for their Motion. *Boethus* had reason to observe, that whoever went about to prove the Immortality of the Soul, from the bare Consideration of its Nature, would stand in

L. 7. de  
usu par-  
tium.  
Cic. Acad.  
Q. 1. 4. n.  
45.  
Euseb.  
Præp. 1.  
11. c. 28.  
p. 555.

need of many, and those very intricate Arguments.

In Quæstionibus.

If then the State of Philosophy was so blind and uncertain as to this most essential and important Article, what total Ignorance must the Bulk of Mankind be under concerning it, or entertain the lowest and most unworthy Conceptions of it? Such as *Plutarch* mentions to have been a prevailing Custom, never to put out the Snuff of a Lamp, but let it die of itself; because they looked upon it to be a living Creature, from its Motion, Want of Nourishment, and the Groan it gives when quenched; to kill it therefore was a kind of Cruelty and Murder. Such pitiful Notions would Men, in a State of Nature, have of this Divine Principle the Soul.

But besides the general Contemplation of the Works of God, in their Grandeur and Magnificence; or the particular Frame of Man, the exquisite Contrivance of his Body, the Intellectual Faculties and Powers of his Soul;

There is, *3dly*, Another natural Means, whereby, it is said, every Man may discover the Necessity of a Divine Existence, with all those great Truths that compose Morality, or the Religion of Nature.

And that is from the Order, Fitness, and Relation of Things.

Great indeed is the System of the Universe, and adorable that Wisdom that could form such infinite Diversity of Beings, all acting regularly by the Laws of their Nature to the End for which they were appointed: Such their Contrivance, Fitness and Order, such their steady Proportions, mutual Relations, and necessary Dependencies; that notwithstanding the boundless Variety of Parts and Members, they all act in Harmony together, and by the fittest Means conspire to their respective Ends, without Defect, without Error or Confusion.

Yet

Yet it is not the beholding these things, a slight Knowledge or Contemplation of them, that will direct us to their first immaterial Cause; for then no one could be ignorant of him: It must therefore suppose a close Attention, a deep Penetration, a thorow Insight of the Fitness between Causes and Effects, their Relations and Dependencies, that must shew us the Universal Efficient God. And if this be the Task imposed upon Man, if he is sent into the World under Obligations to know his Duty and his God, and doomed to find them out in the Secrets of Nature; we need not stick to pronounce him the most miserable of Creatures, fitted for Destruction by the very Law of his Being.

For is not the thing utterly impossible? Who ever did it? Where, or in what Age did they live? Or what were the Mediums in this Procedure? If there be any Memorials, let them be produced: If there be nothing of this, the whole Argument must be a chimerical Non-entity, and placed among the many other vulgar Errors. And that it is so, we need no other Conviction, than to consider how miserably shallow our Understandings are, how little we know of ourselves, or the things about us: That when we contemplate the vast Circuits of Divine Wisdom, and think how much the Designs and Actions of Omniscience and Eternity are beyond ours, it must make an Undertaking of this nature seem desperate, and discourage even Confidence itself from attempting it.

Or allowing that there is a Golden Intellectual Chain hanging from Heaven to Earth, a Clue to guide us through the dark Maze of Visible and Invisible: How many Ages must be spent? how many Systems of Physicks invented, before Man could make the least Approaches to it? Though he is acquainted with nothing but Matter, yet he must know that Matter is incapable of Knowledge and Contrivance; that

that it never acts, but is always acted on; determined by certain Laws, which it necessarily and involuntarily obeys, therefore never could be a Free Agent, to produce itself, or any thing besides. He must find out the Laws by which it is acted on; the several Powers of Nature; the Dispositions, Qualities, and Operations of every compound Being, and what constitutes a thing in its essential Perfections; and then at one extensive View behold their mutual Dependence, and the Relations they bear to each other; discern the Cause of every Effect, see where the Connexion lies, and how the Scale of Beings necessarily ascends, from the Pebble that lies on the Strand, to the glorious Spirits round the Throne above: For if there be not Evidence in every Step, the Conviction ceases; if but one Link is not fastned, by Truth and Nature, to the next above it, the whole Procedure is at an end. For in the Series of Causes, every thing (except the First Cause) being produced by something above itself, if there be one Breach in this Chain of Causality, we must necessarily stop, there is no Possibility of ascending higher.

Now which of the Ancients was this Exhauster of Nature, could explain its Phænomena, or tell how things are brought to pass? Without which all Investigation of a Deity, from the Fitness of things, would be very superficial; and the Magnifiers of Reason need only apply their Enquiries to the Nature of the least Fly, or Blade of Grass, to perceive there is more Mystery in these than Natural Philosophy shall ever unfold; only let them tell us why Grass is green, and their Abilities shall never be questioned.

But alas! they are forced to own the long Chain of Causes, whereon the least Effect depends, is hid from our Knowledge; that we see the outward Form and Workings, but the inward moving Principle we discern not the least of. The Operation of every  
indivi-

individual single Effence puzzles the most sharp-sighted Reason, and has more in it than Royal Societies can discover. And if we so palpably mistake or misjudge in almost every Particular, how can we comprehend the whole? the Methods of divine conducting and ordering the great Frame of Beings? what are their Principles or Limits? their active or passive Powers? what the Wisdom and Disposition of Means, and that Energy wherein consists the immutable Connexion and Series that so finally determines things to their End; and by which all Secondary Causes regularly work under the Universal One.

Principles may be laid down in some Sciences as conversant about the Works of Men: But Nature is the Work of God, wherein we can lay down few or no sure Principles, not being able to penetrate its Design and Wisdom. The most contemptible of Natural Appearances has Qualities and Powers unknown to us, what no Study or Application can perceive or explicate. What Extravagance must it be therefore, to lay down any Principles as sure and certain, whereby the whole Machine operates, and Nature performs her mysterious hidden Works?

Is there not at present a great Variety of Schemes and Opinions, and are there not new Systems of Physicks every Day growing up in the Pursuit and Chace of Nature? How little then is there of that masterly Knowledge, which pronounces of Things according to their real Degrees of Certitude, and can fix the Bounds between Probability and Truth? The Enquiries of one Age have ever criticised and refined upon the preceding ones. And though perhaps there have been greater Improvements in experimental Knowledge in the last Century, than in the thousands of Years that went before it; yet Nature has still her Veil on, is better guessed at, but not known: For what Part of any System is  
more

more than Conjecture, carries Demonstration with it, scientifically declares by what Laws she acts, and explains the Reasons of all this exact Order, Fitness, and Congruity? Or if she did at last unbosom herself to a *Newton*, Was she not a niggardly Stepmother to the rest of her Sons, through a Succession of so many Ages? And who will say that he shall not be dethroned by the next Generation?

The many Errors in the Works of the greatest among the Ancients, may convince us what an obstinate Study the Search into Nature is: And if they were so misled as to justify the most extravagant Absurdities, what Advances could unassisted Reason make in these dark and gloomy Subjects? the Deeper its Penetration was, the fuller would its Conviction be, of wanting a Capacity to know any thing beyond its outward Surface, and acquiesce with an Observation long ago made, *Neque ea investigare curamus, quæ non posse comprehendere liquidissimum est.* It would be Modesty and Wisdom to decline the Search of what is past Discovery, by vainly trying to sound those Depths we know to be unfathomable. It is Arrogance to say a Man can do it, and when convinced that he cannot, it is Folly to attempt it.

Arnob.  
l. 2.

Ethic. l. 6.  
& in De  
mundo.

Timæus,  
p. 594.

What did *Aristotle*, that Prodigy in Nature, know of her Fitness and Relations, when he makes the heavenly Bodies nobler and diviner than Men, in Understanding, Soul and Body, because they are nearer to, and partake of greater Virtue from the Gods; like chief Magistrates or Princes, who by their own Will rule and direct all Things? And *Cicero's* vast Wisdom terminated in this; "That  
" if we can guess right at any Truth, we can have  
" no Doubt to believe that this World is a living  
" Animal endued with Understanding, &c." How many Errors are here crowded in a few Words,  
that



that must necessarily lead a Man from God and Truth ?

And the little Progress made by those Ancients, who studied this Subject with the greatest Approbation, is a sufficient Proof, how invisible the Powers, and remote from Observation the Designs of Nature are: They were not able to fix one Rule, or settle one Principle in her Actings; but every one advanced his own Conjecture, another contradicted and rejected it, and laid down other Maxims, more defective perhaps, than his Adversaries; which still prepared new Matter for Dispute, in which they lost themselves; and some from their not being able to find any Evidence or Certainty in Nature, first doubted, and then denied the Existence of a Divinity.

So that if the Study of Nature was to lead us to Theology, yet considering her profound Darkness, the Delight she has to conceal herself, and the Closeness with which she must be followed, the numberless Appearances to be examined, Observations to be made, Experiments to be repeated, before any probable Axioms could be established; it must convince us, that the Learning of no single Person, nor of Ages, could be sufficient for it. It was the Work of a thousand Years, to find out the Measure of one Year; by which Proportion, the Labour of ten thousand would never have taught them the Will of God.

Nay so far were these Contemplations from having any such Tendency, that they at first lead the World from God; the infinite Variety of Parts, the Subordination and Dependence of Causes, the exact Symmetry, Order, and Motion, the admirable Harmony and Relation between the Elementary, Vegetable, Animal, and Rational Productions, the Fitness and Congruity between Generals and Individuals in all their different Species, persuaded them,

them that the Universe was a perfect ever blessed Being, the first Cause and Origin, and introduced that most early Idolatry of Cosmolatry, the adoring the τὸ πᾶν, *the Universe*, or whole System of Things.

Was it not long after Disputes prevailed every where in *Greece*, in the Markets as well as Schools, about physical Things, the Motion of Matter, Formation of the World, &c. that they introduced a ἄνευ Mind, or intelligent Being, to be not the Creator, but the Orderer of Matter; and attributed to the Elements those Works, which nothing but a Divine Nature could produce? Or to what Purpose did *Aristotle* study Nature with such indefatigable Accuracy, but to believe the World was eternal, had no Original, no Cause from which it proceeded? which at once destroys the Possibility of the Creation, and the very Existence of a God.

*Plato* indeed was very fond of recommending human Sciences for the better Attainment of Divine Knowledge; though it be inconsistent with his frequent Assertions, that the Knowledge of the Gods is a Gift of the Gods, &c. Yet his Master *Socrates* went a shorter way to work; he always consulted the Oracle to know the Will of the Gods: And (as *Xenophon* relates it) never would advise a Study of Geometry, Astronomy, or other Sciences, further than they were useful for the necessary Actions of Life; but not to amuse themselves with the vain Curiosities of Arithmetick, nor puzzle a Man's Brains with he knew not what Figures, Niceties, and Inventions of little or no Use, but what distracted the Mind from other more necessary Studies: So neither would he allow of a too curious Enquiry into the wonderful Workmanship of the Gods in the Disposition of the Universe; that being a Secret, which the Mind cannot comprehend; and because it is not an Action acceptable to the Gods, to  
endea-

endeavour at discovering what they would hide from us, and held it dangerous to perplex the Mind with those sublime Speculations, as *Anaxagoras* had done, &c. Whence it appears that this first and greatest Heathen Moralist, did not come at any religious Truths by the Fitness of Things, but looked on all such Attempts, not only as vain and idle, but unlawful.

*Cicero* likewise thought all these Things surrounded with so thick a Darkness, that no human Understanding can penetrate into Heaven, or dive into the Earth: We are not acquainted with our own Bodies, and can we lay open and disclose the Nature of Things, tell whether the Earth be fixed on its own Roots and Axis, or hangs pensile in the Air? whether there be Antipodes, &c. That *Socrates* and *Ariston* thought no such Things could be known: And the strange Dissent in Opinion among all the Philosophers fully proved that Truth was not among them; that the utmost was Probability, and much was said on both Sides the Question; even of the Mind, whether it were corporeal, mortal, or eternal; and *Cicero* could never account, if the World was made for the Use of Man, why the Gods made Serpents and Vipers, and dispersed so many noxious things through the Elements.

So *Balbus* in *Cicero* confessed, that nothing was more difficult than to abstract our Minds from the Observation of this visible World, when we endeavour to apprehend the Nature of the Gods; and they who would leave the Discovery of a Deity to Collections and Inferences made from the Order of the Universe, would soon banish him, as well as his Revelation, out of the World: For our Minds strangely adhere to sensible things; nor is there any Transition from modified Matter to Incorporeity, from any Knowledge we can attain of the Mysteries or Operations of Nature, to the Wisdom, Counsel or Designs

Vid. Acad.

Q. l. 4.

n. 39.

Lactant.

p. 608.

Nat. D.

l. 2.

Designs of the Maker of all things ; as *Job* at large sets forth, *chap. xxxviii, &c.* The utmost Stretch of Philosophy leaves Man where it found him, groveling upon Earth, where Millions of Wonders still lie unobserved and unknown, upon the Superficies of things.

If then our utmost Knowledge be so slender and imperfect, and the Nature of things so impene- trable, how is it possible to conceive the benign Au- thor of our Beings should leave us to penetrate those thick Clouds by which he is hid from us? *For ve- rily* (says *Isaiab, lxv. 15.*) *Tbou art a God that hidest thyself.* And *Job, chap. xxviii.* shews that there is a Knowledge of Natural things, but puts a quick Pe- riod to human Wisdom: *Men may dig Gold out of the Bowels of the Earth, and the thing that is hid bring forth to Light : But where shall Wisdom be found, or where is the Place of Understanding ? The Depth saith, It is not in me, and the Sea saith, It is not in me.* All our Searches into created Beings, to know the Method and Order of God's Designs, are but in vain, and lost Labour. *Man knoweth not the Price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the Living.* A Work too great for the wisest of Men to attain. *Whence then cometh Wisdom, and where is the Place of Under- standing ?* by what Study shall they attain it, or in what Place come to the Knowledge of it? *God, and he alone, understandeth the Way thereof, and he know- eth the Place thereof.* And that this is confined to Natural things, and not his Providential Dealings with Men, appears from the following Passage: *That he maketh the Weight for the Winds, and weigh- eth the Waters by Measure ; that he made a Decree for the Rain, and a Way for the Lightning of the Thunder ;* all which things are above human Rea- son. *God only sees, and declares, prepares, and searches them out.* And unto Man he said, *Behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Under-*

*Understanding.* Not to enquire into the secret Causes of the Works of God, but attend to his Revealed Will, *to do good and to eschew evil*, which is all the practical Wisdom God requires.

And this Argument will terminate where the other did: Declare the Existence and Nature of God, and then this Fitness, Reason, and Relations of things, will amply declare the Wisdom of the Almighty Artificer. Then the more we observe, and the better we understand the Series and Dependence of things, the greater Necessity shall we perceive to adore and obey their Infinite Author. But to make this a Book for unassisted Reasoners to learn their Duty and their God from, is a Lesson not to be learned in the Land of the Living: A Task that neither *Job*, nor *Hipparchus*, nor *Newton*, could have done. And a learned Author, on these grounds, concludes with great justice, “That he could not but plainly see, Shuck-  
“ that if God had not been pleased to have revealed ford.  
“ himself to Men in the first Ages, many thousands  
“ of Years would have passed, before Men could  
“ have acquired by Reason such a Knowledge of the  
“ Works of God, as to have obtained any just Sen-  
“ timents of his Being or Worship.”

Another Corollary evidently deducible, is, That if Men, with the most sagacious Faculties and unwearied Application, could not attain any competent Knowledge of the Essence or Nature of things, their Principles, Operations, or Powers, their Reason, Fitness, Dependence, and Relation in the general System; which the wisest Men, and the ablest Defenders of Natural Religion, over and over confess: It must follow, that they cannot infer from them any Rule or Law of Acting, or such Obligations as can require and enforce Obedience; because from what is unknown, nothing real, certain, or obligatory, can be deduced; for what the Mind does not know, it cannot believe or obey.

Yet this, in the present Age, is the great Article, the very Foundation of all Religion, and intended to banish Revelation out of the World: For if Reason and the Nature of things plainly point out unto us whatever God requires, or what can tend to the Good of his Creatures; all positive and revealed Laws may be deemed not only superfluous but superstitious, since the Mind of Man and the Book of Nature are sufficient to these Purposes.

But both Parts of this precarious Assumption are false: *First*, No Man ever did, or can attain a Knowledge of the Powers, Relations, or Dependancies of things. Or, *Secondly*, If they could, such Fittnesses would be only Natural and Physical, and could not have in them any Moral Obligation; for that cannot be founded in the Relation of things, but only in the Will of God; and it is the Conscientiousness of a thing's being his Command, that makes it obligatory on the Will of Man; and the free Compliance or Non-compliance with this Conscientiousness, makes the essential moral Difference in human Actions.

Bp. Wil-  
kins.

Dr. Clarke  
Dif. 2.  
p. 36.

This Doctrine is thus stated: " The Law arises  
" from things themselves, which appearing by the  
" Light of Nature to be necessary to our well-do-  
" ing, is called the *Law of Nature*; and thence re-  
" sults the Obligation to the Observance of such  
" things, without the Command of any Superior,  
" who is able to enforce it. For there are such  
" eternal and necessary Differences of things, that  
" the Will of God does always and necessarily de-  
" termine itself to act according to the eternal Rea-  
" son of things; and from this Difference naturally  
" and necessarily arise moral Obligations, which be-  
" ing the Law of Right Reason founded on the  
" Nature of things; is the Law of Nature, Eter-  
" nal, Universal, and Unchangeable. And these  
" moral Obligations being of eternal Necessity in  
" their

“ their own Nature, are in some respect antecedent  
 “ even to the Consideration of their being the Will  
 “ and Command of God himself; for Matters of  
 “ Natural Reason and Morality, are not holy or  
 “ good because commanded, but commanded of  
 “ God because they are holy and good. Whence <sup>Fiddes,</sup>  
 “ it follows, That antecedently to any positive Law <sup>Vol. 2d,</sup>  
 “ or Declaration of God’s Will, Man had a Rule <sup>P. 34.</sup>  
 “ given him, whereby he was to conduct him-  
 “ self.”

All which must be void of Foundation, if there  
 be no Obligation in Law, but what arises from the  
 Will of a rightful Superior, which we have seen to  
 be the Opinion of learned Men in all Ages, till Phi-  
 losophy tainted Christianity. Or, *Secondly*, If, ac-  
 cording to St. Paul, *It is by Faith*, a relying on di-  
 vine Testimony, and not our own Reason or Saga-  
 city, *we understand the Worlds were framed by the*  
*Word of God.* For then the Works of Creation, or  
 the Nature and Fitness of things, could never ac-  
 quaint us with the first and greatest Relation where-  
 in we stand, and on which all others depend, that  
 of Creature and Creator.

It is said, that the Will of God always and neces-  
 sarily determines itself to act according to the eternal  
 Reason of things. But of what things, when none  
 existed? Or what was the Reason of things, but that  
 Nature and Order which he gave them? There  
 could be no Motive to Creation, but free un-  
 bounded Will. The Almighty was under no Ne-  
 cessity to create things when he did, or at all; nor to  
 have placed them in the Series, Rank and Order we  
 now behold them, and on which their present Rela-  
 tions depend. But whenever he determined, he was  
 as free as to the Manner of Acting, as he had been  
 from all Eternity, as to Time; Infinite Wisdom  
 could undoubtedly contrive, and Infinite Power exe-  
 cute whatever he willed; so Infinite Goodness would

furnish all its Works with Faculties suitable to the Purposes of their respective Natures, to answer the End for which they were created.

And when he surveyed the Material and Intellectual World, *he saw that it was good*, i. e. agreeable to his Will, in which the highest Perfection of Created things must consist. There was no Eternal Reason, but of and in God. All things received such Essence, Virtues, Perfections, and Limits, as it pleased his Will, not necessarily, but freely to deal out to them, and no other. His Will was the Measure of all things, in appointing their Natures, and such Bounds as they cannot exceed: And the universal Cause, when, why, and how things are, is only the executive Power of the Divine Will; for his Willing it, is Omnipotence in the Effect; because God can do what he will; and to will a thing, is to cause it, as the executive Power is inseparable from it. Nor is there any Eternal Goodness, but that of God; all Created Goodness is purely relative to that, and could have no Existence before the Creatures: Evil is a Violation of that Rule, or Non-conformity to the Will of God; and consequently not only posterior to Eternal, but even to Created Goodness.

And if Existence be owing to the Will of God, so must the Manner of Existence, that Reason, Fitness, Connexion, and Relations, they stand in, which is only another Method of expressing their Essence or Nature, which is from God, and not of themselves: For the Order of any Being is no more than the Condition it is placed in, or assigned to it, in the System of things, which absolutely depended on the Divine Will; or there must be something external to it, to determine or direct its Operations, which cannot be said of God. But as that never acts in vain, it accordingly directed every Creature in Heaven and Earth, animate and inanimate, to this End; to act in such a manner as is fit and proper for them  
in



in their respective Stations, that is, according to their Nature. And so Plato understood it: Νῆς <sup>Phædo,</sup> εἶσι ὁ διακοσμῶν τὸ ἐν πάντων ἀντίος ; *It is the Mind* <sup>P. 97.</sup> (viz. the divine Mind) *which disposeth in due Order, and is the Cause of all things.*

And the Order they are placed in, is the Law of their Being, *i. e.* to act regularly, according to the Rank that they are constituted in the general System ; so τάξις (from τάρτλω) signifies Law as well as Order, and νόμος (from νέμειν, *to distribute orderly*) Order as well as Law ; and to preserve this Obedience in Beauty, Perfection, and Order, is the End of all Beings, viz. the Glory of him who placed them where they are, and for whose sake (not their own) *they are and were created.* Such Creation constituted the Natural Reason of things ; every thing is what it is, with its several Properties and Relations, as being what the Will of God made it, not from Nature or any Energy of its own ; and there can be no other Eternal Reason of things, than their being what he created them.

And were there no other created Being, which at present subsists, but Man ; he might have a Law and Order of Being, and have been required to act in a manner fitting, proper, and congruous to his Nature, without any other Relation but to God ; and therefore the Relations of things no way infer any Eternal Necessity or Moral Obligation on him, in their own Nature : For Relations cannot be eternal, except the things themselves were so, a Relation without a relative Subject being impossible ; nor can they be (as affirmed) eternal in their Nature ; for they have no Existence or Nature, but temporary, by being created and placed in a certain Order, which was the Will and Pleasure of the First Cause, on whom the several Modes of Being, or not Being, absolutely depend, as the Measure of all ; and without whom nothing else could be, nothing could be possible or

impossible, necessary or contingent, true or false, affirmed or denied.

For Relation, or the Respects of things of themselves, is nothing but that Mode of Existing, and Habit of Influence and Dependence, the Effect stands in with regard to its Cause, on which it wholly depends : And if Essence in Being or Acting were of eternal Necessity in its own Nature, and not dependent on, and subordinate to the Creative Cause or Divine Will ; then it must be independent, if not wholly, in some part of its Essence or Operations, and consequently so far not a Creature. For is it possible for God to make a Creature independent, and not subordinate in Essence and Operation to him ? It is a manifest Contradiction, to be and not to be ; for what does not depend upon God in all its Operations, is not a Creature. It is of the Essence of a Creature to be dependent, and so far as it is independent, it must give itself Being ; but infinite and absolute Causality being essential to God, it is incommunicable to a Creature, either in giving or Continuance of Being.

Therefore Obligation, Fitness, or Relation, can be no older than the System of things themselves ; and as this is not eternal, so neither can be the other, but only a Consequence of their Existence. Now the Will of God must be the Measure of his Power in giving Existence to such a System ; therefore its Nature, Reason, and Fitness, must depend upon that Will which determined things to be what they are. And as infinite Goodness is inseparable from infinite Power, whatever it establishes must be holy, just and good, because Eternal Holiness and Justice cannot act or determine otherwise.

And they who will fix the Congruity of things, by the Laws of their own vain and stoical Imaginations, measuring the Divine Perfections by their own Reason and Rules, are only putting themselves in

in his Throne, to be as wise as God. It is the greatest Arrogance not to allow God his secret Reasons, which our Reason cannot fathom : Because no Created Being can conceive or explain the several *Χρισεις*, Modes, Order, Degrees, and Respects of Dependence and Subordination, in Entity, Existence, or Operation, any one single Effect stands in to the First Cause. Dependence we know, but not the Series, Order, Degree, or Limits, between the various Creatures and the Omnipotent Causality and Influence of the Creator, in which the Relation consists ; nor the Reasons of Infinite Wisdom, which determined the various Degrees of Divine Emanation, Concourse, and Influence. Nay, those very things that seem irregular and deformed, confused and monstrous, are the Issue of Infinite Wisdom and Reason, beautiful in their Place and Time, as they relate to Divine Providence, which orders all things in the best manner.

To conceive otherwise, seems to strike at the Divine Sovereignty over his Creatures, and tie him up by the same Laws that they are bound, and prescribe Rules (dependent on weak fallible human Judgment) to Infallible Omnipotence ; for wherever there is Dependence and Subordination, for Effects to plead their own Fitness, as the Rule or Law of their Being, is arrogating an Independence either in Essence or Operation, is thrusting itself out of the proper Order of Nature, assuming what belongs to another, in which there is no Fitness or Congruity ; but in affecting Equality with the First Cause becomes a Robbery of God. This the Angels once did, and Man now does.

I judge no one but myself, yet cannot help thinking many Expressions used in this Controversy, as no way reasonable, fitting, or congruous to the Divine Nature : That things are not good, because God commanded ; a Rule antecedent to the Will

of God; that Omnipotence cannot do so and so; an Omnipotent Being devoid of all essential and natural Justice; that it is not the Will of God that obliges to do positive things commanded, but the Intellectual Nature of him who is commanded; that if any Commander go beyond the Sphere and Bounds that Nature sets him, his Commands will not at all oblige; that the Wisdom of God is as much God, as the Will of God; and whether of these two things in God, that is, his Will or Wisdom, should depend on the other, will be best determined from the several Natures of them; that Wisdom hath in itself the Nature of a Rule or Measure, but Will is not only a blind and dark thing, but also indefinite and indeterminate; that Will is a plumb-line flexible Rule.

These, and many others, when applied to the Divine Nature, are altogether shocking and blasphemous; a Language unbecoming Christians or reasonable Creatures, in speaking what they know not; as if the essential Attributes could be divided, or act in opposition to each other: Whereas the whole Essence is but one undivided Act, without the least Shadow of Composition or Division; to Will and to Cause, Volition and Omnipotence, cannot be separated in God; though Men in their progressive way of Reasoning, not being able to consider more than one Subject at a time, attempt to do it. But where a Nature is essentially and indivisibly one, nothing is before or after, but unchangeably the same; Will is immutably wise, and Wisdom determinately just; and in neither is, or can be, any thing blind, dark, indefinite, or indeterminate.

His Will is called arbitrary, only from the Sovereignty over his Works, to whose Pleasure they must, and because it is so, they ought, to submit: And as his Nature is infinite Perfection, he cannot go beyond the Bounds of it, for he cannot deny him-

himself, nor require any thing contrary to himself, or what is immutably just and good, that being of his Essence; therefore his Commands at all times oblige, because it is his Will and Pleasure; and not the Nature of Things, which is nothing but the Rank and Order this same Will and unconfined Pleasure has given them.

No one can say that Creation was necessary, for then the Almighty would not be a Free Agent; and if he acted with perfect Liberty, he could be under no Necessity of making Things in the exact Frame they now are: Therefore the Nature and adhering Relation which Things have, are not from themselves, but from him who so framed them; and whose Mind has infinite Reasons for all his Acts, utterly unknown to us: Therefore the Law is not from the necessary Nature of Things, but from him that made them what they are; the present Order is natural, but its Appointment, that it is so, wholly from God; and the Obligation cannot be from Relations, but from him who gives and alters them at his Pleasure; otherwise the Divine Will would be of no Use; for if nothing be consequent to it, it could not be the Cause of any thing; which is contrary to the express Testimony of God, and I hope of Reason also.

It was the Result of perfect Freedom that God made Man, he could have made him, what at present he is not, endued him with more or fewer Faculties; placed him farther from, or nearer to the angelick State; in Proportion to which there would have been a Change or a Difference in his Relation and Law, in that Rank or Order wherein he was constituted, according to which every Creature is intended and obliged to act; consequently the Necessity of this Law must be referred to the Divine Will, as that alone determined the present State or Condition

Pf. cxv. 3. dition of Man; *for he hath done whatsoever he*  
& cxxxv. *pleas'd.*  
6.

We cannot safely conclude, that God necessarily made all Things as they are, lest we take away any Degree of that perfect Liberty with which the Supreme Being must always act (in making every thing for his Pleasure, and after the Counsel of his own Will) and thereby leave him the Power of Creating, but render the Proportions of created Beings of eternal Necessity, which must destroy the Freedom both of Counsel and of Will: Could he not have done otherwise, had it so pleas'd him?

And if moral Dependence be founded on Natural, it will follow that all moral Obligations arise from their Connexion to and Dependence on the Divine Pleasure, by virtue of which all Essences, Proportions, and Relations solely exist; and if they depend on nothing else, then our Actions cannot be moral, because agreeable or congruous to such Relations, but only as they are conformable, and have a Reference to that Will, which appointed such Relations; and the appointing Will, not the Relations or Fitnesses themselves, be the ultimate Rule and Ground of all Moral Obligation. And Bishop *Wilkins*, I think, fully disclaims all these eternal Reasons in the following Words: "It is not the mere

Serm. p.  
51.

"Performance of *such moral Duties* as are of natural Obligation, unless they be done in Obedience to Christ as our *Lord* and *Lawgiver*, and in Reliance upon him for his Pardon and Acceptance as our *Priest* and *Saviour*, that can make us acceptable to Christ, or entitle us to the Name of Christians."

In God, his executive Power and efficacious Will admit not the least formal Difference; for by his Will they are and were created; they are his Essence, the Will of God is Omnipotence, an Almighty

mighty *Fiat* ; he but speaks, and it is done, his Word gives Being, his Word and his Acts are reciprocal ; whatever he wills, immediately exists, in the Time and Manner he wills it ; and as nothing can move the Will of God but his own Goodness, the very same with his Will and Essence (for were it moved by any thing without itself, it would not have the Supreme Perfection of independent Liberty, and acting freely) therefore he willeth nothing without himself ; and all the Reasons of Just or Good, extrinsick to the Divine Essence, are dependent on his Will, who decreed and appointed the Nature of Things (which is their Justice and Goodness) to be what it is.

For if they had an eternal necessary Fitness and Relation before this, they must be antecedent to the Will of God, and consequently prior to, or of the Divine Essence, and must always continue to be so, which is blasphemous to assert ; but they are subsequent to the Divine Will, therefore their Truth is caused by, and depends upon it ; for as he gives Being to all Things, all Proportions, that belong to such Being, must also depend upon the Divine Will ; and that any Truths, natural or moral, belonging to any created Object or Term, could be antecedent to it, is impossible and false ; because the Will of God is the Cause of all Things, and the Effect cannot be prior to the Cause.

And when the great Maintainers of eternal and immutable Morality vouchsafe to quit their Metaphysical Religion, they teach the same thing ; “ To prevent all  
“ Mistake (says Dr. *Cudworth*) I shall again remember, <sup>Morality</sup>  
“ that where it is affirmed that the Essences of all <sup>p. 284.</sup>  
“ Things are Eternal and Immutable, which Doctrine  
“ the Theological Schools have constantly avouched ;  
“ this is only to be understood of the intelligible Es-  
“ sences or *Rationes* of Things, as they are the Objects  
“ of the Mind ; and that there neither is, nor can be  
“ any

“ any other Meaning of it than this, that there is  
 “ an eternal Knowledge and Wisdom, or an eternal  
 “ Mind or Intellect, which comprehends within itself  
 “ the steady and immutable *Rationes* of all Things,  
 “ and their Verities, from which all particular Intel-  
 “ lects are derived, and on which they do depend ;  
 “ but not that the constitutive Essences of all created  
 “ Things were eternal and uncreated ; as if God in  
 “ creating of the World, did nothing else, but as  
 “ some sarcastically expresses it, *Sartoris instar rerum*  
 “ *essentias vestire existentia*, only clothed the Eternal,  
 “ Increased, and Antecedent Essences of Things,  
 “ with a new outside Garment of Existence, and not  
 “ created the whole of them ; and as if the constitu-  
 “ tive Essences of Things could exist apart separate-  
 “ ly from the Things themselves.”

Certainly God was eternal, and knew his Wisdom  
 and his Works ; but if the Essences of Things did  
 not exist before he created them, neither they, nor  
 their Relations could be in their Nature eternal, nor  
 immutable, because God could have produced Na-  
 tures otherwise than he has done, and the only eter-  
 nal, immutable, and necessary Reason of Things,  
 ends in this, that God made them what they are ;  
 they are the sole Result of his Will, subsequent to,  
 and dependent on it ; this is the true and only *Ra-  
 tio* ; and in any other View, they are indeed Objects  
 of the Mind, but without Reasons, Existence or  
 Nature ; not *Rationes*, but mere *Entia Rationis*.

For if the Truth of Things be subsequent to the  
 Divine Will, and the Truth of Things be the Reasons  
 of them, then their Reasons could not be of eternal  
 Necessity ; the Truth and Reason of any Thing,  
 consisting in being what it is, and that, because so  
 willed of God : The Consequence of such Ap-  
 pointment could have no Force or Obligation prior  
 to it ; otherwise Relations of Things would be with-  
 out



out their Existence, and Accidents subsist without a Subject.

If it be said that the Reasons of Things are eternal, because God foreknew and predetermined what he would do, it is saying no more, than that from Eternity necessarily existed an all-wise and perfect Being; and that God had an eternal universal Knowledge; but if it subsisted only in him, then it was God; if it had a different Subsistence, there was something necessary and eternal besides him; and yet the Reason and Truth of Things are not God, though they are an Effect and Communication of his Will to his Creatures; therefore could have no Existence before the Things themselves existed: For otherwise, their Essences, Perfections, Distinctions, Respects, and Operations, which is their Reason, must pre-exist likewise, and Creature and Creator, be one and the same.

And if the Reasons of Things be eternal, so will be their moral Difference, for the one depends upon the other; it is for certain Reasons that some things are morally Evil, others morally Good; and then *Rationes Boni & Mali sunt æternæ*. If eternal, they must have Existence, and if they did exist, there must have been an evil Principle from all Eternity. Or if God's Eternal Knowledge rose from any intelligible Species, Representations distinct from himself, there would be something real, as well as eternal beside him.

It is a Fondness for this kind of Divinity, that has renewed *Platonism* among us, in the Enquiry concerning Ideas, Exemplars, Archetypes, &c. Plato defined Ideas to be Infinite, Immaterial, Immutable, and Eternal, *ἡ αἰὲν κατὰ ταῦτα ὄν*, *always the same in Being*; and we have had learned Men taking great pains to prove the Eternity of the Archetypal Models of the Works of God in the Mind Divine; disputing whether they are real Entities, and whether they

Timæus  
p. 49.  
Norris's  
Ideal  
World.

they have a physical or metaphysical Entity ; whether they are positive actual Beings, can act, think, or will, and whether they are the operative Causes of things : All which is Wantonneſs in Religion, uſeleſs Science, and unprofitable Diſpute.

And the Determination before given muſt take place here alſo ; either they are immanent in, the ſame with the Divine Eſſence, Power and Will, which can neither be compounded nor divided ; or they are ſome way different from it ; and then ſomething with a real Entity will be eternal beſides God : And the Chambers of Heaven furniſhed with theſe Models of the World, and his Works, and nothing being in vain, they muſt be neceſſary to direct his Operations ; and he who could ſpeak a thouſand of Worlds into Being, muſt ſtand in need (like a poor Artificer) in order to do nothing raſhly, to make the Model before he made the Work : Or indulging ſo vain a Suppoſition, of what ſervice or uſe could they be to Created Intelligences ? They can have no Influence on the Ectypal Copies, when finiſhed ; Ideas can lay no Obligation on things after they are created, no more than the Models of *St. Peter's* and *St. Paul's* Temples do on thoſe Edifices, or the Be- holders and Admirers of them.

This Argument would alſo prove too much ; for if all that God foreknew had theſe real Archetypes, then there would be eternal Exemplars of every Beaſt or Inſect, as much as things of a moral Nature : Eternal, Moral, and Natural Evil ; Eternal Good and Bad Actions ; Exemplars of all the Ectypal Copies, coeval with the other Ideas of God : And being certain Contemplations, and real Determinations of future poſſible things, ſuch things muſt neceſſarily come to paſs, ſince there are no Ideas of abſolute Non-entity ; ſo by this Rule, there can be nothing in this inferior viſible World, but what had (and being Eternal, now has) its  
Idea

Idea in the superior intelligible World of Divine Ideas. Nothing being contingent, but God foreknew it, and he (it seems) could not know it, without an eternal entifical Idea of it; and Moral Evil being as much a Reality as Moral Goodness, must have its eternal immutable Archetype.

What is all this but Enthusiasm or Metaphysical Madness in Divinity? A Philosophy which the Apostle condemns, as Science falsely so called; intended to amuse and deceive unwary Minds, and raised as a Battery to attack Revelation from; Words to no Profit but subverting the Hearers, and increasing unto more Ungodliness.

*Nevertheless, the Foundation of God standeth sure, his Word and Commands, his Promises and Assistance, his Acceptance and Rewards, depend not on the sandy Foundation of Relations, Fitness, or Ideas of things; an all-wise Lawgiver has given us a Rule of acting, pointed out the Differences of Good and Evil, taught us whatever is useful to Knowledge or to Duty, communicated what is necessary of his own Being and Perfections. And except he had made such Revelation, we should never have attained the least Notion of Spiritual Entity, Moral Fitness, or Ideal Goodness, nor have had any Measure of Good or Evil. As an all-good Creator he has an absolute Right to command; as dependent Creatures we are obliged to unlimited Obedience; and nothing but his Will can be a Law to an intelligent Creature; nothing else can induce an Obligation. This is the only Moral Fitness Man is able to discern, to walk by the Rule which God has given; his Will is a perfect Law, and whether we should inquire of and obey God or Man, judge ye: He has declared that *the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our Children for ever, that we may all do the Words of*  
*this**

*this Law.* By this Law he will judge us, and dispense its Sanctions of Reward and Punishment : And this alone constitutes the whole Moral Intellectual System, both in Knowledge and Action.

But further: It is impossible that this Doctrine of eternal Fitnesses, Reasons, Relations, &c. should be the Means of coming at Divine Knowledge.

I. Because God affirms the contrary.

II. The Immutability of Relations is inconsistent with the Divine Proceedings.

III It does not give us a true Account of Morality in human Actions.

IV. It is not a Means whereby Men ever did or could arrive at the Knowledge of Divine Things.

V. The Reasons and Relations of Things never were supposed to have the obligatory Force of a Law, even in the Opinion of the wisest Heathens, and therefore could not be to them a Measure or a Rule of acting.

As to the *First*, It is a Character which the Almighty assumes to Himself, through the whole Scripture, of being the only Teacher and Instructor; the Rule, the Law, the Light, and Life of Men. He directs to nothing but his revealed Word, to search for, and find eternal Life. He communicates not himself by eternal Fitnesses, but by his Son, *For no Man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* This is the Truth (the only Way of knowing God) and they who hear not and believe not God's Word, do so only, *because they are not of God.*

Mat. xi.  
27.

John viii.  
47.  
Deut.  
xxix. 29.

It is said, *The secret things of the Lord belong unto the Lord, but the things which are revealed belong unto us.* The secret Will is the Measure of his Operations; and not only the Things he wills, but the Motives and Reasons of his Will are un-

known to, and cannot be penetrated by us. But the things which are revealed belong unto us; that which he reveals is the Law and Rule of our Operation, Offices, and Duties towards him. It is not the Measure of God's Efficacy or Power, nor the Reasons of all his Actings towards his Creatures; but it is the sole Rule, Reason, and Measure of all their Actings towards him, as determining what they ought to do, what not to do.

Again; God declares, *That he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own Will— And hath made known to us the Mystery of his Will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.* Eph. i. 11. Ver. 9.

The Working of God is according to the Counsel of his own Will; that secret Will which no Cause or Reason can be assigned for; and full of mysterious Wisdom, which he hath purposed in himself, therefore not declared but in such manner as seemed best to his good Pleasure: But the sublime and mysterious Reasons are within himself undeclared, therefore no Cause physical or moral can be given of them; for this his good Pleasure and sovereign Independency purposed in it self: And tho' the Divine Will be the absolute Cause of all things, and full of Reasons as to their admirable Dependence and Subordinations; yet there must not be the least Shadow of Reason assigned as the Cause or Motive of it, further than he hath made it known unto us: To inquire further is Vanity; to determine otherwise, Presumption.

*Secondly,* The Immutability of Relations is inconsistent with the Divine Proceedings.

Every Creature both Intelligent and Animal, in Heaven and in Earth, that we know of, have changed those Relations they once stood in.

The Angels had a Freedom of Will, a Choice of Duty or of Sin; yet many of them by Disobedience fell; they cannot now do good; they cannot

but sin. Those who preserved their blessed State, are supposed to be now in a State of Impeccability; and consequently the Proportions they hold to themselves and other created Beings is much altered; their Relation to God nearer, and a Change made in their Law by a new and stricter Conformity of their Will to the Divine.

The same is true of Man; he was originally Upright and Perfect, and had a Law of unerring Obedience, suitable and fitting to the Excellency of his Nature, and which he was enabled to know and to perform, by discerning Good from Evil, with a Power and Freedom of Will to choose the one, and to refuse the other: And in this State, the Relation between God and him was that of an innocent Creature, and a bountiful Creator, unerring Obedience, and Exemption from Death.

By Transgression ensued an essential Alteration in his Moral Capacity; from leading a Divine Life to an Universal Degeneracy, a Corruption of Soul, and Proclivity to Sin, as has been fully acknowledged by many wiser Heathens, as well as felt and complained of by Mankind in all Ages: He was now unable to know, or to fulfil the Law; and a new Relation between God and Man commenced, a guilty Creature, and an offended God; and then a new Law and Covenant suitable to his Condition was established, which obliged to Repentance, and promised Pardon; the Relation then was, a Sinner penitent, and a God forgiving; and new Fitnesses arose from the present Terms of recovering the divine Favour, and avoiding his Displeasure.

In both Cases the Law was what was best and fittest to be done, as the Reason and Nature of things then subsisted; but when an Alteration in them ensued, so there did in the Law also, which was ordained by the Divine Will, and thence received

ceived its obliging Power. Nor is this any way incongruous to Divine Wisdom, which had made free but not impeccable Agents, to adapt his Laws to their altered Condition; and is a Manifestation of his not being under any Necessity to prescribe an immutable Law to a mutable Creature.

Yet to shew the Sovereign Independency of Will, as he was not obliged to interpose any Act of Omnipotence, for preventing the Apostasy of either Nature, Angels or Men, yet his Dealings with them were very different; he (as is generally concluded) added to the glorious Condition of those Angels, who kept their first State, by removing them beyond a Possibility of sinning. Those disobedient Spirits, who wilfully departed from the Laws of their blessed Natures, had the legal Punishment inflicted on them, and are reserved in Chains of everlasting Darkness; and the regular Distribution of Rewards and Punishments is the Effect of impartial Justice. The Law given to Man was also armed with Death, *In the Day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die*: Yet the Sentence against the mighty but fallen Angels, was executed with unrelenting Justice, and yet stands unrepealed. They continue the sad Examples of Vengeance, they may have a Prospect of the Increase of their Torments, but none of their Ceasing or Diminution. Whilst to fallen Man was shewed an Overflowing of the Divine Compassion and Benignity, the Sentence reversed, a Ransom accepted, new Terms of Obedience offered, the most holy Creator reconciled to rebellious Creatures, admits them to a Possibility of attaining, intreats them to accept of a State far more blessed and glorious, than that which by Transgression they had forfeited.

I could wish, therefore, those Gentlemen who so earnestly maintain the Eternal Necessity and Immutability of Relations and Law, Independent of the

Divine Will, would give us some Reasons, why God should be disposed to pardon sinful Men, yet not extend the same Grace to the apostate Angels.

We are told indeed by those who pretend a deeper Insight into the Nature of Angels, than the Scriptures have given us; That as the good Angels are unalterably determined to choose what is Good; so the evil Angels are as unmoveably determined still to adhere to that which is Evil; they were both free indeed to choose either Good or Evil, but having long since fixed their Choice, there is no room for a Change of it. That such as are the Judgments, which any thinking Beings pass upon things, such also are their Inclinations or Aversionsto the things judged of, and consequently they cannot change their Choice. That the evil Angels who once thought Disobedience to God better than Obedience, must always think it so, and being incapable of Repentance or coming to a better Mind, are for that Reason incapable of Forgiveness.

Now though perhaps it must be allowed, that Impenitence and Remission of Sins are incompatible; that Sinners, whilst they continue such, cannot partake of the saving Mercies of God; that a State of Sin and a State of Glory are never to be reconciled: Yet we have no good ground to think the Angels so framed by their Natures, as that it is utterly impossible for the most powerful Grace of God to work in them Repentance; at least what is said of the Fixedness of their Choice, and the utter Incapacity they are in of thinking or choosing otherwise than they once thought or chose, is so destitute of any Foundation from what God has revealed about them, that it may be denied with as much Shew of Reason as it can be affirmed: Nay it is more reasonable to suppose, if we might indulge our selves in such Suppositions, that these revolted Angels who actually feel the Smart of their  
Disobe-



Disobedience, have quite other Sentiments of it now, than they had before they swerved from their Duty; that their Notions of it are quite changed, since they have suffered for it, and that if a Reconciliation could be offered, they would readily accept it.

Another Reason by some assigned, why lapsed Men should be capable, and the fallen Angels incapable of Redemption, is, that Man sinned by the Suggestion of the Devil, but the Angels sinned of themselves without being seduced from their Duty by any Tempter. But God forbid, it should be a conclusive Reason for the inevitable Perdition of any Creature, that it sins of its own accord, without being solicited thereto by any Suggestions from without, since it is to be feared, if that accounts for this Doctrine, the Case of many Men would be desperate: That is, so fall those, who are so far from being overruled by any Temptation to Sin, that they lay themselves open to it, that they invite it, that they work themselves up with Pains and Difficulty to the Commission of it, that they usurp the Devil's Office, and tempt others to sin.

Several other Reasons are given, why God should be inclined to pardon Men, rather than extend the same Act of Grace to rebellious Angels; for such is the intolerable Pride of Man, that he is not content to accept of God's free Grace, without fancying that he finds in himself some powerful Motive to dispose God to be merciful to him. But if we would not think of our selves more highly than we ought to think; if we would think soberly, according as God has dealt to us the Measures of Faith; if we would regulate our Thoughts herein by the Light of Scripture, which alone can guide us in these supernatural Truths, we shall be convinced, that no other Ground for this Discrimination can be given, than the Will and Pleasure

of God, *who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and who will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.* No other good Reason can be assigned for the Preference of fallen Man to the apostate Angels, but that it so pleased God, *who worketh all things after the counsel of his own Will.*

Thus have Relations and Fittestes altered between Creature and Creator, which is the strongest Light they can be placed in; and what holds in the greatest Degree, must also in the less. Thus the Relations between Men and Men are changed, we may be obliged to act against those very Instincts, which, from their deep Engraffment, have (though improperly) been called the Laws of Nature; a Man may be obliged to condemn his Father for violating a Divine Law, or sacrifice an only Son, in Obedience to a Divine Command. And to mention no more, that most sacred of human Relations, Marriage, on which so many others depend, is dissolvable by the criminal Conduct of either Party; not to say, that the original Subjection of the Wife to the Husband, was the Punishment of Guilt.

Thus likewise the several Relations of Dominion in our publick Capacities, Master and Servant, King and Subject, Tyrant and Slave, had probably never been known, if Man had preserved his primeval State.

The Relations betwixt Man and the Living Creatures are totally changed; God gave him an absolute Dominion over them, *Gen. i. 26.* But he no sooner rebelled against his Maker, than they rebelled against him, and are no longer subject to his Authority or Will: And this may have extended to the Beasts themselves, between whom there probably was at first no such Antipathy, as is observed at present, nor cruel Rage and Appetite to devour one another.

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The very Earth stood no longer in the same Relation to Man, but became stubborn and unfruitful, brought forth Briers and Thorns; and Man, instead of enjoying with Ease its spontaneous and abundant Productions, was condemned to be the miserable Tiller of it; *In the Sweat of his Face, and in Sorrow, to eat the Fruits of it all the Days of his Life.*

So far from Truth is that Doctrine of the Immutability of those Relations we stand in to God or one another, that an Alteration has happened in them all; betwixt God and Man, Man and Man, Man and the Creatures, and the Brute Creatures with one another.

And from this Change in Relation, not from any eternal Fitness of things, flowed *New Duties and Obligations*. As for Instance: Prayer is a reasonable, fit, and proper Offering to the Supreme Being, in this Degeneracy of Nature, to supply our Wants, strengthen our Infirmities, pardon our Transgressions, and accept our imperfect Obedience. But in Man's primeval State, when he clearly beheld the Perfections of the Deity, exactly fulfilled the Laws and Obligations resulting from them, possessed the fullest Happiness his Order of Being was capable of: Then Gratitude and Praise were the suitable Returns to the gracious Bestower of such Blessings. He had no Guilt to produce Sorrow or Repentance, no additional Perfections to ask for the Exaltation of his Nature; and where there is no want of Good, nor Evil felt, nor Fear apprehended, there is no Room for Petition or Prayer.

We read of no Duties in the Angelick State, but Obedience and Adoration; and the latter seems chiefly to consist, in never-ceasing Hallelujahs of Praise and Thanksgiving *to him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*, and with the loudest Voices, blessing the God of Angels and of Men: Whereas we understand not that the bad

Angels ever pray for Mercy, that they repent, or that (as being perhaps excluded from any Covenant) there is even Hope in Hell ; for they have no Passions but Guilt, Hatred, Fear, and horrid Apprehensions.

Whereas in Man's altered Condition, Prayer, Repentance, and Thanksgiving are all congruous to the new Relation he stands in to God, who now requires, and has promised to accept them ; not from any eternal Reasons of things, or immutable Relations, or any natural Fitness in themselves, as a Means to attain the End ; for nothing we can offer is meritorious, or in itself deserving of Pardon or eternal Life ; but they are the Terms or Conditions the Divine Will has prescribed, and therefore what infinite Mercy will reward. And hence only arise their Fitness, Obligation, or Merit of Acceptance.

*Thirdly*, This Doctrine does not give us a true Account of Morality in human Actions, in making Good and Evil to be constituted in the Eternal Relation and Nature of things, which we have seen are neither eternal nor immutable ; but new Relations, and consequently new Moral Duties, have commenced in the Intellectual Moral World. Yet *Eternal* and *Variable* are contradictory Terms : In all Created Beings there is a Change, in the Uncreated only is an eternal Stability.

Morality therefore must be relative to something else, which is its proper Measure and Rule, and its Essence must consist in its Conformity therewith : But the only perfect Measure of Morality is the Law, and that not of Men, but of God ; and all Actions are morally good or evil, as they are referred in their End, Object, Circumstances, and have Relation to it, and not otherwise. Whatever by the Divine Law is Good, can never be made Evil ; what is Evil cannot be made Good ; what by this Law is Good or Evil, cannot be made Indifferent ; and is therefore the

the only immutable universal Rule of Moral Goodness. When therefore the Author of *the Religion of Nature Delineated*, says, “ That tho’ Men, after § 1. p. 7.  
“ long and laborious Enquiry, have not yet agreed  
“ upon any one Rule, with which comparing their  
“ Actions, it might appear whether they are good,  
“ evil, or indifferent, yet one certainly there must  
“ be;” Does it not evidently shew the Defect of  
Natural Religion, in the most essential Point ?

That the Rule of Moral Goodness must be perfect, is evident, because a defective Measure cannot be applied, and is therefore no Measure at all: And it must be universally comprehensive, so as to include all Duties and Offices, with their Principles, Circumstances, and End, otherwise it must be imperfect; for there would be Moral Duties to which the Law of Morality did not extend; which is a Contradiction. And if the Nature of Good requires it to be perfect, in all its Causes and Parts, the Measure and Rule of it must likewise be perfect; every Defect is evil, and that cannot be the Rule or Law of Good.

No created Reason therefore can be a sufficient Rule for Moral Goodness, since it is a Part of imperfect corrupt Nature, and cannot but partake of Imperfection and Corruption; and for such Nature to attain Perfection, would not be natural but supernatural; whence all the Good we now do, is not from Nature but by Grace. This also appears from the innumerable Defects in the Laws which Reason has ever prescribed in the Object, Manner, Principles, and End of Moral Goodness: So that they have always stood in need of many Corrections and Alterations; therefore cannot be any Measure or Criterion of Moral Virtue. The Law of God only is universal, so as to comprehend and reach all Cases; therefore that only can be uniform, unchangeable, eternal: Whereas all the Laws of  
Na-

Nature and of Nations, have been defective, stood in need of Restrictions or Alterations, have therefore ever been various and mutable, according to the different Circumstances of Time, Place, and People.

Among the Heathens, the  $\delta \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma \delta \kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , the *Common Law*, was no more than the Precepts conveyed down by the Posterity of *Noah*, which still received new Light from a Converse with the *Jews*, and the Books of *Moses*: For the Decalogue may be said to contain the whole Moral Law, a Summary of what was given to Man at the Beginning; to which all Duties in Piety to God, or Justice to each other, may be referred, and deduced from: What it commands is good, what it forbids is evil; what no Power on Earth can alter or make indifferent. And to say there were any religious Truths antecedent to Revelation, is begging the Question, and a Falshood.

Hence all the Measures of Difference and Perfection in Acts, are to be judged of only from their Conformity to the Divine Law and Will. These being the very Reason, or (as the Schools speak) the formal Idea of all Moral Good, in its Matter, Manner, Principle, or End; there being no other Rule whereby they can be measured. These are their Canon ( $\kappa\alpha\nu\omega\nu$ , an exact Dimension whereby they measured Land) and what directs them to their last End, which is the very Foundation, or first Principle of Moral Goodness: A Sin is nothing else but voluntarily Acting against this Rule, and in that consists its Moral Evil.

For the Morality of an Action does not depend upon the Understanding, because our knowing a thing is not the Reason it is good or evil; no more does the Nature of an Action upon the Will, because the willing a bad Action to a good End, does not take away the essential Malignity of Sin. But  
in

in both, the knowing a thing to be our Duty, and therefore choosing it, constitutes the moral Goodness of it ; the refusing it, its moral Evil.

The late celebrated Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, defines it thus, § 1. p. 7. “ That  
 “ Act, which may be denominated morally good  
 “ or evil, must be the Act of a Being capable of  
 “ distinguishing, choosing, and acting for himself ;  
 “ or more briefly, of an intelligent and free Agent ;  
 “ whence the same Act that is moral in Man, would  
 “ not be so in Angels, who act determinedly ; and  
 “ Morality does not consist in the eternal Nature  
 “ and Reason of things.”

In a Free Agent, what makes an Action moral to him, is his choosing of it as a Means to the End ; this makes an Action his own, (and thence *Mores*, *Morals*, or the *Manners of Men*) of which as a Rational Creature he is able to give an account, why in the matter of Duty or of Sin he preferred one Motive to another ; when he chooses a good Action as a Means to discharge his Duty and the End of his Being, it is moral Goodness : And as when the Will is bad, an Action cannot be good ; so the choosing even a good Action to a bad End, makes it to him moral Evil.

The Author of our Beings has shewn to Man his ultimate Happiness, or final End, revealed the Means necessary to attain it, which are his Laws, and thence is superinduced an Obligation to obey them ; and added the Enforcement of Rewards and Punishments to determine our Choice to an Acceptance of his Laws or Obligation of his Will. The Means therefore are fit and reasonable for a moral Agent to choose, as necessary to attain his highest Good, the only Fitness of an Action being its Relation to this End ; the End is of God's Revealing, the Means of his Appointment, and their Relation to the End makes them fit, congruous,

ous, and reasonable; and our choosing them as a Means to attain that End, is what makes them to us moral Actions; as our inward Judgment approving or disapproving the Choice of such Means, as they tend to the Advancement or Obstruction of such ultimate End, is what is called Conscience; as perceiving, or being Self-conscious, that herein we act agreeably or disagreeably to what we are, to our Nature, as Rational Creatures, and our Order in the Intellectual World.

It is true that the Duties of the second Table have especially obtained the Name of Moral; but it is an utter Abuse of the Word to fix it to Duties which oblige naturally, and are not enjoined by any positive Law, but supposed to be antecedent to Revelation. It being this Choice that constitutes and denominates any Action Moral, and which is the formal Notion of Virtue, as a fit Means chosen to a right End; so *Simplicius* defines it. “For this Reason  
 In Epict. “Virtue, which is the proper Happiness and Per-  
 c. 1. fection, is called ἀρετή, i. e. αἰρετή, a Name  
 “which hath great Affinity to a Word that signi-  
 “fies *Eligible*, not only because Virtue is properly  
 “the Object, but also because it is the Effect of  
 “our own Choice.” And the highest Virtue or Religion, is choosing Means relating to Man’s final Happiness, as a Rule of Action, and Law of Obligation, in being the Will of God, and with an Intention to please him, as his Rewarder or Punisher; whatever is not done with a View, and as a Means to that End, may be an Action of Chance, Indifference, or Stupidity; but is neither fit, moral, nor religious.

And by this Divine Moral Law must be determined, the Good or Evil of every deliberate Action, by the End it is directed to, or the Disposition of the Will in performing it: Hence the Works of Man in Innocence were good, as they shall



shall also be in Glory : Under the Dominion of corrupt Nature they are Evil ; under Grace they are Good or Evil ; as the Agent observes the Law, and not one of them all, as a Means to the End, is indifferent ; for it is the Rectitude or Pravity of the Soul and Will, intentionally fulfilling or neglecting this Law, that constitutes an Act morally Good or Evil ; for no Action proceeding from a Will not rightly disposed, can be good, the Principle is corrupt, and the Action (whatever Life or Virtue it may appear to have) is dead, a Carcase without a Soul ; the End is the great Object of Action, and the only Good End is the Glory of God ; where that is not in the Intention, there is no Virtue in the Action.

*Fourthly*, It is not a Means whereby Men ever did or could arrive at the Knowledge of Divine Things.

The Works of God are the Wisdom of God ; the Suitableness of their Powers and Operations to the End for which he appointed them, is their Fitness : But their Essence, Distinction, Order and Operations, whereby they are disposed, and work as Means towards the End, are the Acts and Secrets of Omnipotent Will, a Wisdom hid in Heaven ; and there would be little Difference between the Human Nature and Divine, if our Thoughts could penetrate them. But whatever Difference there is between the Works of God and Man, so much is there in their Reasons and Wisdom also ; for as the Divine Will is the sole Measure of Acting towards his Creatures, and what gives Perfection to all his Works, and the Rule of his Working full of infinite Counsel, it cannot be possible for us to comprehend or explain it ; they are so far removed from our Apprehension, that we might never pretend to fathom the vast Abyss with the Line of human Reason : For by how much stronger God is than  
Man,

Cl. Alex. Man, so far short and weak must human Reason be;  
Strom. 6. when it speaks not of God, but only of Things  
p. 697. relating to him, even his Power or Works; for all the  
Knowledge we have of God is from God.

But if Morality depend upon Fitnesses, and Reason is to be the sole Discoverer and Judge of them; we should wander eternally, in following a Guide which led the first Man into Polytheism and Idolatry, as it does the Moderns into Scepticism and Infidelity; an *Ignis fatuus*, that never could distinguish the Difference of things, but called Evil Good, and Good Evil, taught there was no Sin in Fornication, Incest, Sodomy, Community of Wives, &c. Or with the Stoicks, held some things good, some bad, others *ἀδιάφορα*, *neither good nor bad*, and *ἀδιάφορα*, *indifferent*, amongst which were placed all Kinds of the most unnatural Uncleaness, as being a Medium betwixt Vice and Virtue.

And it has been evidently shewn that no Reason can judge of the secret Fitness and Relations of Things, the Mysteries whereof Nature is composed, from our being so entirely in the Dark as to the inward Composition of all Bodies, even the minutest Part of Matter. We cannot judge or determine concerning them with any Degree of Certainty, but from their outward Appearances and sensible Effects; when we attempt any thing beyond this, all our Reasonings are full of Confusion and Uncertainty; can answer no End but that of useles Speculation and Amusement; and to make Religion dependent on what we are so entirely ignorant of, is to render it the most precarious thing in the World.

Vid.

Locke,

l. 4. c. 3.

§ 26. &c.

p. 332.

The several Powers, Efficacies, and Ways of Operation, whereby the Effects we daily see, are produced, are hid from us, in some Things by being too remote, and in others by being too minute. What Sorts of Furniture and Inhabitants there may be in the upper visible Orbs, we cannot so much as guess

guess at; of those Bodies which fall under the Cognizance of our Senses, are nearest to us, and most under our Command, we cannot have any adequate Ideas: Nor shall we ever be able to discover general, instructive, and unquestionable Truths concerning them; Certainty and Demonstration are Things we must not in these Matters pretend to.

And as our Ignorance must increase proportionably as Things are remote from us, much more so must it do of the spiritual World, whereof we have no Cognizance, nor can frame to ourselves any distinct Ideas of their Essence, Rank, or Order; yet infinitely beyond these is the Divine Mind and Will, whose infinite Reasons, Counsels and Designs, must for ever remain unknown to his Creatures, farther than he is pleased to declare them; what were the Purposes of his Will, wherein the fixed and regular Connexion of Causes and Effects consists; how Causes work regularly and Effects constantly flow from them; with the necessary Dependence one upon another, up to the first invisible Cause. In none of these, or even how the Mind operates upon the Body, can we have any scientifick Knowledge; we have scarce room to guess, so great is our Ignorance.

Our whole Stock of Knowledge reaches no farther than this, that they are the arbitrary Determinations of that all-wise Agent, who has made them to be, and operate as they do: But in what manner is not needful, or without Revelation possible for us to comprehend: For to create is the sole Prerogative of the Supreme Agent; the different Modes of Dependence, and Relations of Being, are the Result of Omnipotence and absolute Will: And therefore, what our moral and supernatural Dependence is, must be impossible for the natural Man to know, without a supernatural Assistance; and *this God worketh in us both to will and to do* (not necessarily but

Phil. ii. 13. but freely) *of his good Pleasure* : How is it then possible from any View or Comprehension we have of Nature or the Universe, to form a sufficient Rule or Law of Acting, to fulfil the End of our Being ? Can there be a Law without Science, or Obligation without Evidence ? Or either Science or Evidence concerning Things we have no Proof of, neither Faculties to enquire after, nor Abilities to comprehend ?

It is sufficient to say the God of Nature could not intend this as a Means to come at the Knowledge of Divine Truths, or that the Reason and Fitness of Things constitute, or of themselves are an Indication of a Divine Law ; or that the World from them could transcribe a Rule of Duty ; because the Ancients could never carry their Philosophizings on the true Frame and Course of Nature to any tolerable Degree of Perfection, and consequently not attain a competent Knowledge of the Author or End of their Beings, if it was to be learned from the Fitness and Dependence of Things ; or were the Fact possible, yet the Study and Apprehension of these Subjects is so embarrassing and difficult, that few could discern enough to be of real Use, and the Bulk of Mankind none at all. And as the Obligations to Duty must vary according to Mens perceiving such Fitnesses, the Consequence would be, that most Men would be freed from all Obligation.

Or if the Differences in Things are to be Indications of the Universal Law (that which binds every one) and declarative of its Obligation without which it could not be a Law ; it were impossible there should be such Difficulty, in discerning what was so evident, such Doubts and Perplexities even among civilized Nations about what was lawful or unlawful, just or unjust, which consist (if any thing

thing does) in the Measure and Relation of things. Such amazing Contradictions in the Manners of the World, that some should do with an excusing and applauding Conscience, what others were shocked at the Thoughts of, as abominable and detestable: This could not be possible, did the Law come by this means, for then would its Obligations and Sanction come thence also; and, as being natural, be equally coercive to all: Yet we see there are Millions of God's Rational Creatures, who have not the least Perception of them, discern no such Rule to judge of the moral Rectitude or Obliquity of their Actions, but act contrary to them without Knowledge or Remorse: Now that cannot be a Law, which neither instructs, reforms, nor carries Obligation with it.

*Lactantius* will have Power and Wisdom so nearly related, that if a Man could understand divine things, he also could perform them; and as he cannot *do*, so neither can he *understand* the Works of God, which are known only to himself. As the Divine Nature, so the Divine Wisdom is perfect: But human Wisdom, confined to the Body, and clogged with Passions, is full of Error and Darkness.

In respect then of all those Intelligibles which transcend the Mind, God must be the Intellectual Agent, to enable it, by his own Notices and Aids, to contemplate Divine things; for it cannot, by any Thought or Enquiry of its own, attain the least Idea of a Divine Condition, nor of what is said to be nearest to it, the Angelick State, without a suitable Instruction or Irradiation. The Soul has Powers and Faculties to receive certain Degrees of such Truths, but only potentially, not reduced into Act, but by the Intervention of some Agent; as Colours are discernible, but not actually seen, without the Help and Interposition of Light. A Doctrine, which *Plato* frequently repeats: "That the Mind <sup>Epinom.</sup> p. 989. "of

Repub. 6. “ of Man needs Divine Illumination to understand  
 p. 483. “ Divine things, as much as the Eye wants the Light  
 &c. “ of the Sun to see visible things.”

From all which we may safely conclude, that without Revelation, no Fittests, &c. of things, would have ever brought the World to a Knowledge of God, the Relations we stand in to him, the Obligations arising, or the Duties necessarily flowing from them.

*Fifthly*, The Reasons and Relations of things never were supposed by the wiser Heathens to have the obligatory Force of a Law ; and therefore could not be to them a Measure or a Rule of acting.

The only adequate Notion of a Law (as already shewn) is the Will of a rightful Superior communicated to Intelligent Beings, as a Rule of their Actions ; both Law and Obligation necessarily supposing (says Archbishop *Tillotson*) the Authority of a Superior Being. And no one can have such Authority, but he that is Supreme, and has absolute Dominion over all ; *of whom, through whom, and for whom are all things*. For every Creature having Bounds to its Essence, has also Bounds to its Dominion and Operation ; a limited Cause must necessarily have a limited Power and Activity. Except Man had Being of himself, and a World of his own framing, he could not be a Rule to himself for the Determination of his Actions ; but must be determined by the Law of his Maker for the Nature of his Actions as good or evil : For all moral Determination must arise from the Divine Will, expressed in his Moral Law ; because he gives Being to all, is the Life of Living things, the Reason of Rational things, and the Intelligence of Intellectual ones.

The great System of Created Things has no Dominion, Power, or Influence over Man ; they give him not Being, his Actions no way depend upon their Disposition, no Measure of Law, or of moral  
 Good

Vol. 2d,  
 Sermon 58.  
 P. 406.

Good and Evil can be derived from them ; but from him only, who is the First Principle, the Directive Cause, the Source and Spring of Motion and Operation to all his Creatures. There can be no eternal Law, but the sovereign Pleasure of him from whom all other Beings receive not only Existence, but their Essence, Nature, and Order ; and whose Congruity, Fitness, Mode, Manner, or Relations of Existing, have neither Goodness, Counsel, or Intention, but what proceeds from him. They neither are, nor can frame Laws to themselves or others, but are wholly directed by, and dependent on their first Cause and last End. To judge otherwise, is perverting all the Fitness and Order of Nature, for the Effect to bid defiance to its Cause, the Stream to renew its Fountain, to remove a Creature from the limited Rank wherein Nature has placed it, to the Throne and Dignity of the Creator.

When we say a thing is fit to be done, it must be as a Means to the End, and therefore a proper Motive to incline a rational Creature to do it, it being the highest Act of Reason to perform every thing in such a manner as best answers the End of its Being, and is perfective of its Nature. But the Fitness is no constituent Part of the Law, has no Power to lay an Obligation ; that can arise only from the Will of the Legislator, who has a right to prescribe the Means, and a Power to oblige Conformity to it ; or that Man, as well as the rest of his Creatures, should act in such a manner, as he judges most fit and suitable to the Nature he had given him.

It is therefore a fruitless Distinction, tho' so strenuously insisted on, that natural Laws are of greater Obligation than positive ones, because they have an intrinsic Goodness in themselves ; whereas the other are good only because commanded (not to say there was no moral Duty or Goodness antecedent to Revelation, and their being enjoined) for the formal

Reason of Obligation cannot possibly arise from the Goodness of a Law, but from the Authority and Will of the Imposer; God commands a Thing in itself absolutely indifferent, *i. e.* not commanded (for there is no moral Goodness in any thing antecedent to the Divine Will and Determination) the Thing is then as much a Law, as if it was never so good in its own Nature: He forbid the Eating of a Tree, which without the Prohibition had been indifferent, and the Transgressor was condemned for the Breach of the Law, though purely positive. God forbid the gathering of Sticks on the Sabbath, therefore the Man that gathered them was put to Death for it. In all Cases it is the Will of God, and not the Goodness of the Thing, which induces the Obligation: No other Reason can be given for Obedience, because that only can oblige to it; we cannot go farther, nor suppose a Law independent of it.

Call any thing a Duty or a Virtue, natural Religion or Law; yet we shall find the whole World, Jews and Heathens, considering the Obligation of it only from its being commanded; they did not appeal to Reason or Nature, or the concurrent Practice of the most civilized Nations, as a Rule or Measure to judge of this by, but traced it up to the Appointment of the first efficient Cause, that is, from the Authority and Declaration of the most holy and perfect Being, the Author, and sovereign Lord of Nature; and expressly taught, that the Parent and Governor of the Universe has implanted, declared, and commanded certain Things, particularly pointing them out, to be observed, by the Name of Good and Honest; and others to be perpetually avoided, under the Name of Evil and Dishonest; and that from hence is the Law of Nature composed, its several Members growing together, as into one Body. That from this alone

(not-

Vid. Selden de Jur. Nat. & Gent. juxt. Disc. Ebr. l. 1. c. 8. p. 95.



(notwithstanding the Multitude of Opinions and Judgments, sprung up from the Operation and Use of human Reason) does the Obligation which is called Natural proceed; that some things are declared dishonest, others Good, as from the Command of the Parent of Nature, and his Authority, by which all are bound: So they never cease to be so, but Punishment follows the Violation of that, which by being commanded ought to be obeyed; as Rewards also do the Observation of it.

Thus Cicero says, *Hanc video sapientissimorum fuisse* Leg. 2.  
*sententiam, &c.* This I perceive was the Opinion of<sup>n. 4.</sup>  
 the wisest of Men, that Law (and he certainly speaks of the Natural one) was neither devised by the Wit of Men, nor was any Decree of the People, but something Eternal, that Wisdom, which by its Commands and Prohibitions governs the whole Universe; therefore they say, this Principle and ultimate Law is the Mind of God, commanding or forbidding all Things: And he declares, that the Obligation of Law is not only more ancient than the Being of Men, but coeval with God who governs and preserves the World; for the Divine Mind cannot be without Reason, nor Divine Reason without the Power of enacting what is Good and Evil. *Quæ vis non modo senior est, quam ætas populorum & civitatum, sed æqualis illius, cælum atque terras tuentis, & regentis Dei. Neque enim esse mens divina sine ratione potest, nec ratio divina non hanc vim in rebus pravisque sancientibus habere.* And a little after, that a Thing did not commence to be a Law when it was written, but when it first arose; but it arose together with the Mind Divine. Wherefore the true and sovereign Law, fit to command or prohibit, is the right Reason of the Sovereign *Jupiter*. So in that famous Passage, so often cited in favour of the Law of Nature; *Est* <sup>Laëtant.</sup>  
*quidem vera lex, recta ratio, naturæ congruens, &c.* he<sup>l. 6. c. 8.</sup>

fums it up in faying, *Deus hujus legis inventor, difceptor, lator*; "That God was the Inventor, the Judge, and Maker of it;" for there is but one common Mafter and Lord of all.

Here it is obfervable, that the Law *Naturæ congruens*, congruous, fit, or agreeable to Nature, is not fupposed to be the Invention of Reason, or obvious from Nature, or conftituted in the Fitnefs or Relation of things, but to be wholly the Mind and Will of God, as both the Efficient and Declarative Caufe of it. And hence, *Secundum Deum vivere, & Deum fequi*, are frequently taken for the fame, as *vivere fecundum naturam*, and even *fecundum rationem*, in Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and others; and Hierocles, in his Comment on the Verfes of Pythagoras, fhewing what it is to obey Right Reason, makes this juft Obfervation, that to obey Right Reason, and to obey God, is the fame thing; for Nature, which is rational, having obtained divine Illumination, defires thofe things which the Divine Law determined; and a Mind guided by God, does not differ from the Will of God, but contemplating the Divinity and Splendour, does what ſhe does: So that he makes God, as by declaring his Will he commands Reason, to be the only Rule and Meafure of Duty, and confequently of Obligation.

And hence the Laws of Nature are fometimes called *Common Notions*, but moft frequently τὰς θεῶν νόμους, *the divine Laws*, or given by God: And that Reason receiving thefe Laws, becomes a moft vigilant Judge to itfelf, whereby they feem rightly to denote the Power of Confcience; namely, that from the Authority and Declaration of God there is fuch a Relation or Conjunction between God and Man, whofe Reason is thus informed and commanded, as to be conſcious to the Deity of difcerning the Heads of that Universal Law, which perpetually bind, in being thus declared and commanded; as alfo confequently

quently of the Obligation superinduced by an Authority superior to any human Power, and the Punishment appointed as a necessary Attendant on the Violation of it; for *consciūs*, in the Matter of Duty, is the same as *cum alio sciūs*, as *Nomius* expresses himself on this Word.

With this the wisest Heathens agree. *Plato* says, In *Minos*. "That the Sceptre of *Minos* in *Homer*, is nothing "else but the Doctrine received from *Jupiter*." For the same reason *Demosthenes* calls Law in general, or the Foundation of all Law, *Positive* or *Natural*, among Men, *ἔσθημα ἡ δῶρον Θεῶν*, the *Invention and the Gift of God*. And *Dion*, *Διὸς Δεσμὸς*, the *Ordinance of Jupiter*. And *Euripides* styles the common Laws of Men, *νόμιμα Θεῶν*, the *Laws of the Gods*. And many Expressions of the same Import occur among the ancient Poets, who abound in this Philosophy. The *Platonists* also teach, *Νῆ ἔστιν ὁ Νόμος διανομή*, that *Law is the Distribution of the Mind or of God*. And that they were immutable, and of perpetual Obligation in their Opinion, seems to appear from what they teach of future Punishment. And it is reasonable to conclude, they imagined the Laws which were violated, to be from the Gods, as well as the Punishment inflicted on the Violators. Nor must it be unobserved, that the most famous Lawgivers of those ancient Ages, *Minos*, *Solon*, *Draco*, *Charondas*, and others, thought they could give no Authority or Obligation to their Laws, had they not pretended to receive them from the Gods.

Orat. 1. adverb.  
Aristogit.  
Orat. 80.  
In *ἰκέτησι*.  
Vid. *Stobæum*  
Eclog.  
Physic. 1.  
1. c. 7.  
Proclus in *Theolog.*  
Plat. 1. 5.  
c. 9.

And from the Observance of this Universal or Natural Law given by the Authority of God to our First Parents, and from them handed down to their Posterity (which preceded the Law of *Moses*, and was afterwards incorporated with it) it is, that *Noah* was found just, and *Abraham* became the Friend of God. And *Origen* expressly calls the Law of Nature, that which God ordained to Man-

Adverb.  
Celf. 1. 5.

kind. So on that Passage in *Isaiab*, *They have transgressed the Laws, changed the Ordinances, broken the everlasting Covenant*; which appertained to other Nations as well as the *Jews*, *St. Jerome* says; "Let the *Jews* hear this, who boast that they alone received the Law of the Lord; that all Nations in the World received the Law of Nature, &c." But they had the written Law by *Moses*.

In *Isaiab*,  
l. 8.

*Gen* v. 22.  
& vi. 9.

*Gen*. xxi.  
33.

For as to the universal, equally common Law of Mankind, the *Jews* never were of any other Opinion; but as often as they had Occasion to mention it, their usual Expression was, "They were commanded to the Sons of *Noah*, i. e. the whole Race of Men, and the first Man *Adam* received them from God." For they held that certain Natural Laws were immediately after the Creation, declared, and commanded to Men, which from the Divine Authority became of perpetual Obligation; whence the Paraphrase of *Orkelos* on those Portions of holy Writ, where *Enoch* and *Noah* are said to have walked with God, expresses it, that they walked in the Fear of the Lord; and thus they became Righteous, because they kept the Commandments, which were appointed as early as our Nature, and propagated through all Mankind: Hence the Fratricide of *Cain*, the Abominations of *Sodom*, and several other Facts mentioned in the Book of *Moses*, were wicked, and became unlawful before the Delivery of the Written Law: And where *Abraham* is said to call upon the Name of Lord, the everlasting God, the *Jews* suppose, that he made Profelytes, that is, taught Strangers, and brought them to believe, and profess the Observance of these Precepts of Natural Law, which were obligatory from the Command of the most high God.

From the concurrent Testimony then of the whole World, *Jews* and *Heathens*, we may easily understand,

stand, what Obligation is, and whence its Force is derived; for all Manner of Law properly so called, must be Divine or Human: Divine, as immediately declared, ordained, and commanded by God; whether Natural, as just now represented, *i. e.* coeval with the Being of Man; or positive, as what were afterwards added under the several Covenants: But both are equally obligatory, that is, appointed by an express Command of God. Human Law is that which has been superadded by Men, so far as the Divine, whether natural or positive, permits; but the Obligation of all Law must be referred to the sole Power and Authority of the great Governor of the Universe: For he, as the Supreme Ruler of all Things, shews what in itself is Good or Evil, and commands this to be embraced, that to be avoided; and so strongly obliges from his own Nature and Will, that nothing can be imagined superior to it: And hence is plainly seen the efficient Cause of obligatory Law, both what is called Natural, and what thereto is added in the holy Scriptures. In which Sense and no other, natural Laws remain eternally firm and immutable: For in all these Cases Reason can only persuade, but has no superior Power, as that of Commanding, over Men; and therefore the Rise of all Obligation must be from the Authority of some Being superior to Man; and the Law is eternal and immutable, as being the sovereign Pleasure and Decree of God; and it is the Law of Nature, as that is the Subject of its Government and Direction.

From the whole, we may conclude these modern Expressions, that the Law arises from Things themselves; as also its Obligation, without the Command of any Superior; that such Obligations are of eternal Necessity in their own Nature, antecedent to the Will and Command of God; and that Man had a Rule to conduct himself by, before any  
Declara-

Declaration of the Divine Will, &c. have no Foundation in Reason, Nature, Fitness, or the Possibility of Things; but are most dangerous Errors, introduced to weaken the Force of Religion, by depreciating the Usefulness, Necessity, and Authority of Revelation.

Nothing but the Will of God can oblige; that Will cannot be known, unless revealed; this Revelation declares the essential Differences of Things, and the Consciousness of their being the Command of God, makes them become the perfect immutable Rule, Measure, and Law of our Acting, and subjects us to its Sanctions of Rewards or Punishments.

From the general Observations hitherto made, it seems to appear, that as human Power cannot produce more than a human Act; so for Reason to discover the Nature and the Will of God, is supernatural, a Gift above Nature, *δωρεάν ὑπὲρ φύσιν νικῶσαν τὴν φύσιν*, *overcoming Nature in its present Degeneracy*; under which its proper Characters are Ignorance and Death, and the Dead may as easily arise and walk, as the human Mind direct itself to a Divine Life and to God.

For as nothing can dispose a Being to act above its Condition and Nature, but the Assistance of a superior Agent: So in Man, nothing can enable him to do those Things, which are above his natural Capacity, but the supernatural Influence of God; for this is above his Natural Reason, or what it is able to do, *i. e.* impossible: Such Knowledge therefore cannot be had, but from a Cause on which the Mind absolutely depends, and is able to raise and elevate it above its natural Condition. *Aristotle*, that Prince among the Heathens, and chief Advocate for Reason and Nature, was forced to allow all Good to be *θεοδωρεον*, *the Gift of God*: Sacred Philosophy confirms the same, *Can*  
*the*

*the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil.* Nature is insufficient to it, and whoever duly considers his own Impotence, must tremble at the Thoughts of having no other Guide to his final End, than the Light of Nature: As every Step preparatory thereto is an Advance towards Pharisaical Pride, Security, Infidelity, and Atheism; for *God sitteth upon the Circle of the Earth, and the Inhabitants of the Earth are as Grasshoppers.* We bear as little Proportion to the Divine Nature and Divine Things, as those Insects do to the Knowledge and Wisdom of Man. Jer. xiii. If. xl. 22.



## C H A P. V.

*God not to be defined nor demonstrated, therefore not discoverable by Reason.*

**B**UT to put this Argument in another Light, in order to shew the great Difficulty, if not utter Impossibility of knowing God (the Foundation of all Religion) from the Exercise of our natural Faculties; let us consider it according to those Rules and Proportions of Certainty, which are required in every other Part of Wisdom; wherein we possess just so much of real Truth and Knowledge, as we comprehend the Truth and Reason of Things, and no more; otherwise we may be said to know them, without comprehending any Truth or Reason concerning them.

For if there be any Meaning in the Word *Knowledge*, it must imply a Notion or Idea of the Object in the Mind; and that this Existence of the Object in the Understanding, be agreeable to the  
Existence

Existence it has in its self; else our Conceptions of it cannot be said to be true, for true Knowledge is a Correspondence between the Idea and the Object; and they who would argue scientifically on a thing, must have just Conceptions of its Causes and Effects, its Properties, Qualities, and Operations; without which we are ignorant of its Nature, and have only a false Opinion of it, and Knowledge will terminate in a Lye, or a Dream. For a Lye is nothing else than having no Conformity with the Truth of a thing, or Name by which it is called.

Repub 5. And to dream, as *Plato* defines it, “Is to imagine  
P. 476. “a thing, which is like to another, not to be like  
“it; or the same with another which is not like  
“it.” Both which Acts are Falshood, or not  
comprehending the thing as it is.

Now, in the Language of the Schools, to comprehend an Object is to apprehend it according to every Mode and Reason whereby it is intelligible; thereby to define it, or give Terms and Bounds to it: For he that perfectly comprehends a thing, gives Limits and Bounds to it in its Intellect; and Terms of Definition follow Terms of Essence; whence the Impossibility of the Divine Nature's being known or defined by a created Intellect, incontestably follows from its Infinity and Immensity; and hence proceeded those strange and different Conceptions and Definitions of it among the wisest of the Ancients; such as a Mind permeating the Universe, Nature, Infinite Æther, Energy, Necessity, Elementary, with numberless other Imaginations; and they who seemed to understand the Divine Majesty best, as *Xenophon* and others, did it by despairing to understand it all. And *Aristo* not only rejected Logick as useles, and natural Philosophy from not being able to conceive the Divine Nature; but on the same Account retrenched a great deal of Morality also.

For



For God is the only way to himself; he cannot in the least be come at, defined, or demonstrated by human Reason; this is only to be done by Faith; *not in the Wisdom of Words, but by the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit.* This Consideration is so embarrassing, that we see the greatest Maintainers of Natural Law forced to take Shelter under the false ridiculous Cover of innate Ideas.

“ That if the Soul be a mere *Tabula rasa*, a naked  
 “ passive thing, which has no innate Furniture or  
 “ Activity of its own, nor any thing at all in it,  
 “ but what was impressed upon it from without ;  
 “ there could be no such thing as Moral Good or  
 “ Evil, Just or Unjust, nor any such thing as Mo-  
 “ rality in the World.” And the great Philoso-  
 “ pher Dr. *More*, “ That God has engraven the  
 “ eternal and immutable Rules of Divine Reason  
 “ upon every Man’s Spirit, which come in as free-  
 “ ly as the Light of the Sun into their natural  
 “ Eyes.”

Cudworth  
 Morality,  
 p. 287.

p. 288.

Vol. i.  
 p. 464.

But surely the Soul may have Activity and Powers to receive and contemplate Truths when offered to it, though no Part of its essential Furniture: And it only follows, that Man could not find out his Duty and his God without Assistance; and that the Discovery of the Divine Being and Will is supernatural: But that God, according to the pre-determinate Counsel of his own Will, manifested so many, and as much of his Perfections as was fitting or sufficient to our final Good. In doing of which he has stooped to our Capacities, that by the Resemblances he has made, our Understanding might be enabled to conceive some distant Notion of him: But would not be known so as to be defined, for he never yet revealed his Essence to any; *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.* Therefore in describing the Divine Nature, it is impossible to tell what he is; we must

Athanas.

1 Cor. ii.  
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be content to know what he is not. A Plenitude of Perfection is a Secret to us among the Depths of infinite Wisdom, not to be penetrated into, or discerned by a created Being. The most we can apprehend is by removing every Degree of Imperfection; but attempting to declare a Nature altogether Incomprehensible, would be a daring Folly and Wickedness. The Spirits round the Throne are unable to do this; they only praise that Glory which they cannot stedfastly behold; and shall Man who knows not any thing around him, nor his own Being, search into, find out, or unfold the very Shadows of those Attributes which the Angels cannot look upon?

Our weak imperfect Minds are lost in the vast Immensity and Redundancy of the Deity, overcome with its transcendent Light and dazzling Brightness; which therefore has to us an Appearance of Darkness; as the unbounded Expansion of Light in the clear transparent Æther, has to us the Appearance of an azure Obscurity; and when we have filled up our Capacity, there is still an Immensity of it left without, which can only be apprehended, by our being as it were plunged into, swallowed up, or lost in it.

Of this human Imbecillity the early Heathens are a full Instance and Witness; notwithstanding the Advantages of traditional Knowledge, they never attained more than the Shadows or Images of divine things; whatever they advanced was distant, broken, confused and dark; too thin and airy to prove a Foundation for real, solid, and substantial Knowledge; which *Plato* every where remarks of them, that their Contemplations and Notions of divine things fell infinitely short of Truth; that they could only be said, ὄναρ ἢ ὕπαρ ζῆν: To live a Sleep, or a Dream. That it was impossible for the Mind of such to see and embrace the Nature  
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of *ὡτ' ἑ τῆ καλῆ*, of Beauty it self : That they were, *Φιλοσόφους μᾶλλον ἢ φιλοσόφους*, Lovers of Opinion rather than of Wisdom : And that all their Shadows and Dreams concerning the *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, consisted in Opinion, not in Knowledge; *δέξηται ἐκ ἐπισήμη ἐφάπτεσθαι*. And when he seriously reviews his own Wisdom, he is forced to confess, that *τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν*, what is beautiful and good, is *ἄγνωστον* unknown to us, and all those things which we look upon as Ideas. Therefore it is neither named, nor declared, nor conceived, nor known, nor perceived by any of those things that are; and the Primitive Christians copied from them, in affirming that all the Truth the Heathens saw was but *ὄνειρώτισσαν ἀλήθειαν*, in a Dream.

Repub. 7.

p. 534.

Parmenid.

p. 134.

Clem.

Alex. Ad-

mon. p. 42.

*Secondly*, Allowing from the Infinity of Essence, and Disproportion between that and a finite Capacity, that God cannot be comprehended so as to be defined; it being impossible for any Nature to comprehend what is supereffential, or infinitely above it; yet that Man, by the Use of his Faculties, might with Certainty attain some Knowledge of God, or as far as he is knowable or intelligible.

To which I might answer, that even this would be in no Degree at all: But where would this Inquirer fix his Beginning? he is to search for something he knows not what; a Nature without known Properties; a Being without a Name, and strictly speaking incapable of one; for Names are Manifestations of things where many Individuals are to be distinguished by their proper Appellations; therefore what is but one, and Incomprehensible, can have none. We must be ignorant of this Essence, so need not inquire out a Name for it; though he assumes to himself such as are proper for our blind corrupted State; many of which are negative ones, *ἄχρον*, *ἀόρατον*, *Ἔσθ*. without time, not visible, *Ἔσθ*. And what is purely Negative, can give

Minuc. F.

§. 18. p.

95.

no positive determinate Notion or Conception; when applied to God, it is no more than Comparison, and separating him from the Creature; but what the proper Meaning of them is, when spoken of his Essence or Nature, is to us an unintelligible Term: And being ignorant of the Term, we cannot fix any Idea or Conception to it. And when *Moses, Exod. iii. 13.* inquired of God his Name; the Answer, *I am that I am*, imports an eternal, incomprehensible, independent Being.

But for a Man to seek after something, which he hath neither seen, heard, nor hath it entered into his Heart to conceive; what he must know, before he looks for it, is incapable of Name or Definition, would nonplus a Philosopher out of a State of Nature. Since whatever he came to know, he must be assured was not the thing sought for, which to him therefore must appear *ἀφάντας*Ⓒ, quite unimaginable; for he must set about comprehending God, yet convinced at the same time, that could he comprehend him, it would not be God. For whoever imagines he knows the Divine Nature, lessens it:

Minuc. F. And whoever does not lessen it, can never pretend  
Ib. to know it.

It is impossible for such Person to declare or imagine what it is he would discourse of, or inquire into; a Nature he has not the least Apprehension of; a Subject he has not the least Glance of, in whole or in part, which he must separate from all Doubt, Inconsistencies and Errors: He must demonstrate without one known or sure Principle to ground it upon; and draw certain necessary Conclusions whereon to rest his Judgment, without the least Knowledge of one Term or Proposition to fix his Procedure on; and therefore can never know whether his Conclusion be consequent, or not consequent, Truth or Falshood; which is just the same in Science, as in Architecture to raise a Building  
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ing without a Foundation. Whatever the Moderns, who are sharp-sighted above Measure, can do; the Ancients, by whom we must judge in the Case before us, always taught, that we must know the Use and Meaning of Names, before we can the Things themselves, and that by this Means is their Nature best investigated and manifested. Thus *Plato* in *Cratylus*: Πρὸς τὸ ὀρθῶς διδάσκειν, δεῖ πρῶτον ἐξετάζειν τὰ ὀνόματα; in order to learn rightly, we must first accurately inquire into Names. And again, Names have the Power of teaching Things, and he who truly understands their Names, plainly discerns the Things themselves. This is what *Diodorus* says in *Thucydides*, lib. 3. Ὅι λόγοι διδάσκαλοι τῶν πραγμάτων γίνονται, Words are the Teachers of things: And to mention no more, *Plutarch* de *Iside & Osiride* delivers it as the Opinion of all Philosophers as well as his own: Τὲς μὴ μανθάνοντας ὀρθῶς ἀκρίβειαν ὀνομάτων, κακῶς χεῖσθαι καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν. They who are not exact in understanding Names, will make but a bad Use of, or easily mistake in the Things themselves.

In other Cases a Man is supposed to know some Truths, and the Meaning of a Proposition, before he can proceed to determine any thing concerning it, because till he understands the Terms, it is impossible he should judge whether it be true or false; so that if a Man is ignorant of his Mark or End, he shoots like a blind Man at random, and in vain considers all things tending to the End: for without knowing the End, he cannot take Counsel by what Means to attain it; and if he attain it without Thought, or Method, or Means, so may a Fool or Madman as well as he; for without Consultation there is neither Thought, nor Judgment, Invention, or Knowledge.

If the Propositions in a Syllogism are only founded on Opinion, no more will be what is inferred

from them ; if they are false, so of Necessity must be the Conclusion ; if they have no Relation to the Subject, it can receive no Light from them. And it is impossible for one ignorant of the whole Question propounded, to come at any Part of the Truth. In all Inquiries there must be something known, of it self credible, and to be believed without Demonstration, from whence we must proceed to the Investigation of other Truths, this being the Foundation and Criterion of those things which seem to be found out : For every Question is found out from some Knowledge we are in Possession of, which must subsist before that which is sought after. In some Cases we inquire into the Essence of a thing from its known Properties and Operations ; in others, from their sensible Effects only ; but where the Essence, Affections, Properties, and Operations are absolutely unknown, and no apparent Relation or Dependence of an Effect upon the Cause, there is no Possibility of finding it out ; or if we could, yet cannot know it when found. And if there be the least Confusion in the Terms, there must be a Fallacy through the whole Procedure ; and what we conclude, may be something, or nothing, or any thing, as well as the thing sought for.

Were we to convert an *Indian*, and lay before him this Proposition, *There is a God* ; we should first endeavour to make him understand what is meant by God, what kind of Being is called by that Name, and as far as lay in our Power describe the Perfections of his Nature, before we could reasonably expect him to believe there is such a Being ; for a bare Name conveys no Idea with it. And for any one to go about persuading Men to believe the Existence of a God, without first acquainting them with the Nature and Attributes of such a Being, is an Endeavour to persuade Men to believe they know not what, and to assent to  
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something as an undoubted Truth, which they understand nothing of.

This is the very Case of every Person in a State of Nature; before he can know there is a God, he must understand what is meant by a Supreme Being, and wherein his Perfections consist, so as to distinguish him from others; that he is Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, &c. otherwise something may exist, but he knows not what: He is ignorant of the Term, and the Proposition may be true or false; we must apprehend the Nature of a Thing before we can be assured it exists, because it is the Nature which specifically distinguishes the Thing. As no Man therefore can know more of the Divine Nature than he is pleased to reveal, no Man by the Strength of Reason can discover his necessary Existence, because any thing may be said to exist as well as God, if we know nothing of his Nature or Perfections.

We need not Scruple then to say, that those Philosophers who named God, knew him not, nor what they philosophized about, when they spake so many Falshoods, and so little Truth concerning him, and ascribed Properties to him utterly inconsistent with his Nature: Establish the one, and you destroy the other; they are Extremes never to be reconciled, nor brought together; a Name and Existence they had by rote, but not the Meaning of either; in these their Conceptions and Imaginations were merely visionary. They judged of the Gods by themselves, attributed to them the same Passions and Affections, Shapes, Infirmities, and Wants, and never could separate the one from the other; they had the Name, but not the Thing. Birds may be taught to imitate the Words of Men, but have no Notion or Apprehension of what they say. And when *Homer* said, Πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε Θεῶν τε, *He neither knew who the Father was, nor in what manner*

Clem.  
Alex.  
Adm. p.  
49.

*be is so*: And all who attempt this Subject without the Divine Assistance, are like those who would endeavour to walk without Feet.

That *Pythagoras* perceived his own Ignorance of the Divine Nature, and the Impossibility of forming a correct Notion of it, appears from that famous *Axiom* in his School, “To disbelieve nothing that was wonderful concerning the Gods, nor even concerning Divine Things;” which opened a Door for the Belief of every corrupt Tradition, however monstrous or inconsistent, according as their Vanity or Credulity prevailed: If it was but wonderful and struck their Imagination, the Rule was, “Apply it directly to the Divine Nature, however irreconcilable with it.”

So *Pherecydes* who was the first among the *Greeks* (as *Laertius* out of *Theopompus* says) who wrote  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$  φύσεως ἡ Θεῶν, of *Nature and the Gods*, in his Letter when dying to *Thales*, wherein he acquaints him, “That he had ordered his Writings to be carried to him, and that if they pleased him and the other wise Men, they might publish, if not, suppress them:” He adds this melancholy Account of human Abilities; “They contain nothing certain, or that gives me Satisfaction; so that I profess not to know the Truth, nor to have attained to it: I start many things which I cannot discover.” So *Ptolemy* the famous Mathematician, left off the Study of Divinity and Physicks; the former because human Weakness could no way discover or come at the Knowledge of it from the excellent Nature of its Objects: The other, because it could not be apprehended or retained, from the Inconstancy and perpetual Change in Matter.

The *Greeks* took great pains to improve their almost lost  $\kappa\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\iota$  ἐννοιαί, or imperfect Notices of original Revelation, by importing a new Stock of Principles and Traditions, in order to make a new

Edition

Cæcl. Rho-  
dig. 1. 14.  
c. 19.



Edition of Natural Theology; but were so far from attaining their End, that all their Attempts and Studies to this Purpose, served only the more effectually to entangle them in gross Ignorance, Superstition, Idolatry, and Atheism. When Divinity was lost, and Philosophy undertook to restore it; the highest Part of Wisdom it aimed at, was to institute some kind of Religion, and appoint some proper Ceremonies for the Worship of the Gods: With this View *Pythagoras* ransacked *Egypt* and the East; yet after all his Labours, the whole of his Philosophy was an Heap of idolatrous Superstition, altho' it retained some obscure Images and Characters of Truth. The Event answered not the Greatness of the Attempt; nay Natural Theology was by these Undertakings corrupted rather than improved; for he introduced the Doctrine of Demons, and many other Extravagancies never heard of before amongst them.

Few or none understood their own Philosophical Notions concerning God and Divine Things, neither rightly conceiving nor understanding the Things on which they discoursed: As *Plato* ingenuously confesses, that he had received many Mysteries from the Ancients which he understood not, but expected some Interpreter to explain them to him: And they who understand not a Subject, will wrest and deprave Expressions to other Senses than they were originally intended; even *Serranus* can allow, that *Plato* might speak many Things which he took out of the *Phœnician* Doctrine, but understood not; no more did the *Phœnicians*, from whom he borrowed them; and therefore could not but be unintelligible, as *Plato* calls them, ἀπόρρητοι, *ineffable Notions*, ἀπόρρητα μύθῃ, &c.

This was the Case of them all; they had some general Names and Ideas, loose, broken Notices of the Things they discoursed of; but had not any particular

ticular Apprehension of the Parts, Qualities, Causes, Influences and Effects of Things; they had only some general Rumours or traditional Notions of God, his Divine Perfections, Operations, and Effects of Providence, the Origin of the Universe, the State of Innocence, the Fall of Man, &c. And therefore both their Notions and Reasonings of them were confused and imperfect, nothing evident, distinct or clear, either of the first Cause or its Connexion with the Effects produced by it; and consequently the Knowledge was opinionative, without a steadfast certain Persuasion of the Truth of them.

They had no substantial, real, intuitive Contemplation of those things about which they philosophized; they could obtain no more than some artificial Pictures, or rather Shadows only of the first Principles, of God, Nature, and other Mysteries, which were conveyed to them by some broken, oriental *Jewish* Traditions; but these were only Phantasms, no real solid Notices or Ideas of the Divine Things they related to; and were no more than an equivocal, artificial Contemplation, as much differing from true Knowledge and its Object, as the View of the Sun in a Picture differs from that in the Firmament.

*Thirdly*, There are but two Ways of knowing the first Cause, either from its Effects, or its Manifestations. In Physicks, there is a double Procedure, from a known Cause to the Consideration of its Effects; which cannot be in the Case before us, the Cause being supposed utterly unknown; or from visible effects, to enquire into their invisible Causes, in which also our utmost Knowledge is slow and uncertain: All the Truths of Nature are found bigger than our Minds; so that we can have no perfect Apprehension, no Idea or Conception of the Nature of any Substance; for the lowest Substances have many puzzling Difficulties and Entanglements  
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in the Speculation of them; something in their Essence that is incomprehensible: But that Philosophy which is divine, is vastly different, it contemplates the invisible Natures of invisible Substances, which are infinitely removed from us, what we can neither understand nor conceive; and in which there can be no regular Procedure for an uninformed Mind, in ascending from visible material Effects to the Knowledge of immaterial Perfections and Truths.

There is no Scale or Ladder of Entity and Perfection one above another, no Order of rational and intellectual Beings to lead him step by step to the unmade intellectual Creator: This proved the first Stumbling-block to the Ancients, that they could not conceive an Incorporeity, any thing entirely void of Matter, much less an immaterial Maker of it; no Heathen in the World believed God the Creator of Matter; and the Reason of this must be, because there is no Connexion, no Order, or Method of ascending by any Scale to the Contemplation of spiritual Objects, to the Demonstration and Knowledge of an immaterial Substance and invisible Cause; for if the Ancients did not do it, it is only to say in other Words, that Nature never could do it.

*Fourthly*, If it be said, that from the contemplating Things visible and intelligible; we may by Analogy proceed to the Discovery of unknown Invisibles; and the Mind from a Knowledge of the Creature, raise itself to an Apprehension of the Creator: First it will be granted, that the more abstracted Things are from Matter, and remote from Sense, the more difficult they must be to be understood; the more pure and spiritual they are, the less Proportion they bear to our Understanding, and therefore the less knowable; for all Knowledge supposes

some Proportion betwixt the Faculty and the Object, in order to the Reception of its Idea or Image; but the Disproportion betwixt our natural Apprehensions and the divine Perfection is infinite; and that Capacity which is too small for the embracing human Things, can by no Length of Experience be able to rise to the vast Extent of Immense and Eternal ones: But if some things are difficult, others more so, some most so; it will follow, that what is at the widest Distance of Infinity, as God is, cannot (except our Minds are commensurate to all Truth) be discernible or intelligible.

When we make Inferences and Comparisons from things, between which, by some Similitude, there seems to be a Relation; yet we must be thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of one Thing at least, before we can judge that any other resembles it: Which of the Works of God then do we so far comprehend, as to ground any Proportion, Comparison, or Likeness with God? Not a Dust on the Earth, a Drop of the Sea, or an Atom in the Air, but we are ignorant of its Cause, Frame, or Production; and what can we infer or conclude from an Essence unknown to one infinitely more so, nay utterly incomprehensible?

Or if we had an exacter Knowledge of Nature, than has been yet attained, we could not, by any Rule or Gradations of Analogy, find any Likenesses to conduct our Thoughts to a Contemplation, Notion, or Idea of God, because both they and we are finite, and there is no Proportion betwixt that and Infinity: There is nothing like God, *in the Heavens above or in the Earth beneath*, from which we could infer his Being or Nature; there being nothing to which we can compare him, to form the least Idea or Resemblance of him.

In Natural Things there is no Intercourse of Action and Passion, unless they have some Proportion

tion each to other; or unless they communicate in some common Matter. But no such Intercourse between Material and Immaterial, Temporal and Eternal, can occur to an uninstructed Mind; there is no common Subject wherein he can unite and bring them together; it is against, *i. e.* above the Law of his Being, and therefore a Contradiction: Where there is no Proportion between Ideas, there can be no Transition, or Connexion; and of Subjects whereof there is no Resemblance, we cannot think or speak further than they are declared to us.

A Mind that has no Knowledge but of Sensibles, sees or hears no other Objects, can abstract no Ideas from Matter, but what are material; and had he Mountains of them, his Attempt would be as fruitless as the Giants invading *Jupiter*; heap Matter upon Matter, it will never amount to Immateriality, nor open to his View the new Scene of Insensibles and Invisibles; without an Instructor to open his Eyes, it would not be possible to conceive an angelick Being, because it can have no Resemblance, no Idea of a Substance purely spiritual; yet vastly remoter from Matter, is an omnipotent Being, comprehending in itself all the Possibilities of Things.

If such a Mind could discover any Truth, the first it met with would be its own Weakness and Narrowness of Comprehension; of which if it were not immediately convinced, it could not discover any thing else; no Object of Science being so evident to the Mind, as its own Short-sightedness and Ignorance, which would immediately damp any further Enquiry (one would think) after Infinity and Immateriality.

And nothing can be more visionary or false, both in Nature and Experience, than those Operations, and Sallies from Earth to Heaven, which some learned Men, in favour of an Hypothesis, attribute to the Mind: That the Intellect doth not rest here, but upon occasion of these corporeal things thus

Cud-  
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p. 176.

comprehended, naturally rises higher to the framing and exciting of certain Ideas from within itself, of other things not existing in those sensible Objects, but absolutely incorporeal : For being ravished with the Contemplation of this admirable Mechanism, and artificial Contrivance of the material Universe, forthwith it naturally conceives it to be nothing else but the passive Stamp, Print, and Signature of some living Art and Wisdom, as the Pattern, Archetype, and Seal of it ; and so excites from within itself an Idea of the divine Art and Wisdom. Nay considering further, how all things in this great mundane Machine are contrived, not only for the Beauty of the Whole, but also for the Good of every Part in it, that is endued with Life and Sense, it exerts another Idea, *viz.* of Goodness and Benignity from within itself ; and from hence presently makes up an Idea of God, a Mind infinitely good and wise ; and so as it were resounds and re-echoes back the great Creator's Name, which, from those visible Characters impressed upon the material Universe, had pierced loudly into its Ears, but in such an indiscernible manner, that Sense listning never so attentively, could not perceive the least Murmur or Whisper of it. And this is the most natural Scale, by which the Intellectual Mind, in the Contemplation of Corporeal things, ascends to God.

No ! the Whole is perfectly unnatural, without Example or Foundation in Nature. Innate Ideas are Non-entities, and corporeal Objects cannot convey or stir up incorporeal Notions. There is no Archetype but the Mind Eternal, and no Scale betwixt that and a Creature, but the Manifestation of its own Light. Supernatural Knowledge cannot be from Nature, but Instruction ; and the Original Instructor, God, the Archetypal Intellect, and the only possible Teacher of things belonging to himself.

For as no Ideas (or the Pictures and Representations in the Mind of the Things, for which they are substituted) can reach the Understanding, but through the Senses; the Deaf-born have no Ideas of Sounds, nor the Blind of Light, nor the Natural Intellect of Divine things, because the first Inlets are shut up, by which alone they could have reached the Imagination; but they may be, and are conveyed by the Inlet of Language and Instruction, which is also through the Use and Mediation of the Senses; and yet no Advantage given to the Atheistical Cause. Some have indeed affirmed, that we can have no Idea or Notion, Conception, or Thought of any thing, not subject to Sense: Whence the Atheists inferred, that we cannot have the least Evidence of any thing but from the same; therefore there being no corporeal Sense of a Deity, there can be no Evidence at all of his Existence, since Sense is to be the Criterion of Truth.

But this Objection is here totally removed; Sensible and Insensible are wholly dissimilar, nor can the Nature of one instruct us in the other; but as the Eyes of the Blind may be opened to see, and the Ears of the Deaf to hear; so may the Mind, by supernatural Instruction, be enabled to conceive and discern those Truths which are not the Objects of Sense or Nature, and which it never could have received, if a superior Wisdom and Power had not acquainted it with them. Which is no more than what the last mentioned Author in another Passage observes: “That our Understandings are many times ignorant, doubting, erring, and slowly proceed by Discourse and Ratiocination from one thing to another. They are but potentially all things, as *Aristotle* tells us, &c.” What actually furnishes the Capacity then, but Instruction, gives it a new Stock of Materials, and directs it to the Contemplation of what before was unperceived and indiscernible,

coverable, and makes that Knowledge actual, which before was only potential ?

Such is every Natural Man and Savage (and all Minds without Culture are the same) they could neither hear the Whisper nor the Thunder of the Works of God, speaking either his Name or Being. These Notions proceed from no innate Ideas or Abstractions from Matter, or any Self-reflexions, or internal Operations. The Effect can never exceed its Cause, nor Reason discover supernatural Objects, without a Communication of them from the Fountain of Wisdom and Knowledge.

The only Method of Ratiocination then left him to come at these Subjects, must be the Rule of Contraries: That as whatever is cognizable by him, is gross and material ; therefore he must conclude (what his Senses or Imagination could never admit) that there is a Substance without any conceivable Parts, Extension, or Solidity, neither visible nor tangible, incorporeal, remote from Matter, a pure Spirit, which he can have no sensible Perception or abstracted Notion of. The acutest Philosopher never had ; every Creature he observes, is perishable, dies, corrupts, and revives no more ; therefore there is an uncreated, necessary, self-existing Being, without Beginning or End, Incorruptible, Infinite, Eternal ; and that some Part of himself (which he has no Knowledge of) shall die and rise again, and be immortal. From whatever Properties he does, or can know, he must infer something opposite to it, undiscoverable by, and contradictory to the Testimony of his Senses, and what therefore he cannot possibly believe. Nor in all this does he understand one Term or Syllable, and can therefore never methodize his Thoughts, so as to draw a Conclusion from them, or even a Persuasion.

This is all the first Planters of the World could do, who, after a few Descents, retained nothing but the  
Name



Name of their Forefathers God and Religion, and had no Teachers but the Course of the Rivers, the Flowing of the Sea, the Painting of the Fields, and the Motions of the Heavenly Bodies. The Disquisitions of Zophar would be suitable to them: *Can I by searching find out God? Can I find out the Almighty to Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what can I do? deeper than Hell, what can I know? the Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* These are the noblest Works of God, yet insufficient to acquaint us with their Author. Job xi. 7, &c.

In other Sciences, such as Logick, Geometry, &c. their Foundation, or Knowledge of what Relations things bear to each other, is by their Agreement with some Third Being or Proposition, to which their Relations are mutual and equal: But here there is no Medium, whereunto we can compare the Divine Nature; and to imagine uncultured Reason could wade through the vast Abyss to unknown Regions, and proceed with Certainty to the Apprehension of it, is no more than Enthusiasm and Chimera; a Power which God and Nature have denied to it. There are Limits given to every created Being, and Bounds set which it cannot pass, beyond which all things are dark and impenetrable. This is the Condition of Man; he has Faculties to receive what God vouchsafes to reveal of himself: This is the Limit of Human Understanding, it can add nothing thereto. To receive larger Emanations, is the Privilege of the Blessed: To know all of himself, the incommunicable Prerogative of God.

All this is fully established from the Poets and Philosophers of old, who knew the Name of God; but being ignorant of what he had revealed, and adventuring to speak of the Divine Nature, uttered such extravagant Absurdities concerning it. Tho' many things are spoken worthily, yet there are more so repugnant, false, and injurious, as render their sublimest

most Philosophy a rude and strangely incorrect Draught of the Divinity.

Yet this must always be remember'd to their Honour, that let their Attainments be what they would, they never ascribed them to their own Reason or Sagacity, but always lament the Darknes of these Subjects, the Weakness of the human Mind, the little Satisfaction they met with in their most diligent Searches, the Want of a better Guide; and constantly acknowledged, that whatever great or good thing any Man does, was owing to the Assistance of the Gods. For which reason, *Homer* and the Poets gave to all their Heroes a God for their Companion in Danger, and held that no Man ever was considerable without their Help and Inspiration.

Cic. Nat.  
D. l. 2.  
n. 66.

*Plato* wished for a Prophet to reveal the Will of God to us, without which we cannot know it. And *Socrates*, in his *Cratylus*, "That good Men only are wise;" and is every where full of this Doctrine, "That all true Knowledge of the Gods is from the Gods; and that the Mind of Man stands in need of Divine Illumination to understand Divine things, as much as the Eye wants the Light of the Sun, to see visible things." And *Plotinus*, after him, makes God to be Essential Wisdom, from whom all the Rays of Created Wisdom stream as Beams from the Sun. Both *Plato* and *Cicero* say, "That Philosophy is the Invention and Gift of the Gods, not Men: That it was this first instructed us in the Worship of them, in all Social Virtues, and Greatness of Soul: That this dispelled Darknes from the Mind, by which means we discern what is above us and below us: That God is the Beginning, Middle, and End of things." Thus plainly attributing whatever they knew of the Gods, or Divine things, to no Principle, but the Gods: And *Plutarch* says the same: "That the Knowledge of  
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Epinom.  
p. 986.

Rep. 6.  
483.

En. 5. l. 8.  
c. 5. p.  
546

Tusc. Q.  
l. 1. n. 26.

If. & Ofir  
Init.

“ the Gods can only be had from them.” And it was sometime a settled Maxim in the *Socratick* School, “ That even Virtue is not from Nature or Discipline, Meno, “ but *Δείξα μοίρα*, by some Divine Infusion, and even p. 99. “ without the Concurrence of the Mind.”

But how difficult and embarrassing a Subject the wisest of them thought the Contemplation of Divine things, appears from their own Confessions. Thus *Pythagoras* affirmed, “ That God was Darknes, unknown, impenetrable Obscurity.” And it seems to have been a primeval Tradition, if the Sentiment of *Mercurius Trismegistus*, to whom it is ascribed, *Θεὸν μὲν νοῆσαι χαλεπὸν, φράσαι δὲ ἀδύνατον· τὸ γὰρ ἀσώματον σώματι σημειῶσαι ἀδύνατον;* Stobæus Tit. 78. de Diis. it is difficult to conceive God, to declare him impossible; it not being possible to set forth what is incorporeal by that which is corporeal.

*Plato* probably copied him, when, after all his painful Searches, he complains, “ That it is difficult to find out the Parent and Maker of the Universe, and when found, scarce lawful or possible to declare him to the Vulgar.” On which *Origen* makes this Comment, “ That *Plato*, by saying it was difficult, argued the Impossibility of Human Reason finding out God according to the Dignity of his Nature; but if not in such a Degree, yet that he might in a good Measure be known, and more than he is by most Men.” Which had it been true, that he or any other had found out God, they would not have worshipped, or adored, or called any thing God besides him; and neither added nor diminished any thing that could essentially appertain to such a Being. But we affirm, that Human Nature is not able to find out God in any degree; nor can he be truly found by any, unassisted by him who is searched after; but is discovered by them who humbly confess, that besides their own Endeavours they stand in need of his Assistance, manifesting

festing himself to such, as far as the Nature of God can be declared to Man, or the Soul of Man, whilst in the Body, can know of God.

*Diogenes Laertius* reckoned *Plato* among the Scepticks, for saying, τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς θεοῖς κ' θεῶν παισὶν ἐγγωρεῖν, τὸν δὲ ἐικότα λόγον ζητεῖν; *That he left Truth to the Gods, and the Sons of the Gods, but for his own part he only searched after what was probable.*

Certain it is, that he every where speaks with the utmost Diffidence, and even Despair, of ever attaining the Knowledge of Divine things. “ That undoubt-

Repub. 6. “ edly there are many intricate and perplexing  
p. 505. “ Difficulties in this Enquiry, after the Knowledge

“ and Idea of the greatest Good: That the Soul

“ doubts, and is at a stand, and not able to appre-

“ hend sufficiently what it is; or attain therein that

“ Assurance which it does in other things; and

“ this makes it err from the Truth, in endeavouring

“ to find one in the same manner that it does the

p. 506. “ other: That Opinion without Knowledge is des-

“ picable, and the best Opinions are but blind (or

“ Guess-work) nor is there any Difference between

“ those who happen to guess right at Truth, with-

“ out knowing it, or the Blind who find the Way

“ by Chance. The Knowledge of the greatest

“ Good seems to be placed beyond the Reach of hu-

“ man Discovery; and I am afraid, whilst I endea-

“ vour it, of being baffled in the Attempt, and

“ exposing my Weakness; for believe me, the

“ Majesty thereof seems to surpass the Limits of

“ human Understanding. It appears therefore pro-

“ perest to consider the Offspring, and the greatest

“ Likeness of that Good, that we may thereby ap-

“ proach the nearer to his Nature, and afterwards

“ unfold the History of the Father; and I wish

“ myself able to explain, and you to apprehend it.”

P. 507. “ And in explaining this Doctrine, he says, “ That

“ things themselves are comprehended by the Senses,

“ but their Ideas by the Understanding: That the  
 “ Sun is neither the Eye nor the Light, but the  
 “ Cause of it; and what Light is to the Eye, that is  
 “ Truth to the Mind; the Eye cannot see without  
 “ the one, nor the Mind understand without the other:  
 “ So the Idea of Good is the Cause of Truth and  
 “ Wisdom. They are excellent things, and like it, p. 508.  
 “ but not the thing itself. Light and Sight ap- P. 509.  
 “ proach nearer than other created Beings to the  
 “ Nature of the Sun, yet are not the Sun; so Know-  
 “ ledge and Truth have a Resemblance of the Su-  
 “ preme Good, yet neither of them is it. As the  
 “ Sun is not only the Cause that things are seen, but  
 “ also of their Generation, Growth, and Nutrition,  
 “ but not the Generation itself: So the Supreme  
 “ Good is the Cause not only that things are known,  
 “ but also of their Essence and Existence, yet not that  
 “ Essence, &c.” And to shew how little known or  
 believed in the World Divine things were, he in-  
 troduces *Glaucus* raising a loud Laughter at all those  
 sublime Doctrines he had been delivering.

But the Philosopher here plainly distinguishes  
 three things, the Faculty of Sight, the Object to be  
 seen, and the Light to discern it by: So in Divine  
 things, Reason is the Faculty, God the Object; but  
 Illumination from himself the only Light to enable  
 the Mind to discern him. There is an inward Eye  
 of the Mind, which is contemplative Reason: The  
 Understanding of the Soul is the Light of this Eye,  
 but divine Communication the Sun of this Light, and  
 God is the Fountain and Father of all spiritual Light:

And to shew that all the Attainments of Philoso-  
 phy in these deep Studies of the first Principle, the  
 Nature of God, and the Mysteries of Divine Know-  
 ledge, had nothing real or solid in them, but were  
 mere Phantoms and Imaginations without any Pro-  
 priety; empty Notions and Shadows of the things  
 they related to: He feigned a subterraneous Dwell-  
 ing or Cavern, the Entrance of which lies open at a

Repub 7.  
 P. 514.

great distance, in which there are Men from their Childhood tied Neck and Heels together, lying upon the Ground, and not being able to turn their Heads, can see nothing but what is before them. He then would place a Fire artificially, betwixt which and the Persons bound, Men might walk carrying Statues, Vessels, and other things, the Shadows of which would fall upon the opposite Side of the Den. They will undoubtedly, says he, think these Shadows to be the very real things themselves, and the Words they hear to be the Words of these Shadows. Such is the State of these Men lying bound in darkness. The Den is this World, wherein Men lie prostrate on the Ground bound with Chains of native Ignorance; so that we cannot turn our Heads about to contemplate the true Light τῆ ὄντος, of Being; but can only see the Shadows of things, which yet we guess are the things themselves, &c. It is not possible to represent more emphatically the Blindness and Ignorance of Human Nature, and the Impossibility for Reason to discern Divine Truths, or have the least real intuitive Apprehension of them; for τὸ τῆ ψυχῆς ὄμμα κατωρυγμένον ἐστὶ ἐν βαρβαρικῇ ἀγνοίας βορβόρῳ, *the Eye of the Soul is quite immerst in the barbarous Mire and Filth of Ignorance.* But that if afterwards these Persons were brought into the Light, first beholding the Reflexion of things, and then the real Substances, in Heaven and Earth, the Moon and Stars, but principally the Sun, as it were directing all things in this visible World; they would immediately conclude that the Sun was the Author of Times and Seasons, governed all things, and was the Cause of whatever they beheld.

P. 533.

P. 516.

So that in *Plato's* Opinion, the most glorious Works of Nature would not lead Men to the Knowledge of God, but rather stop their Minds, to consider the Sun, &c. as the first Cause, which had been the real Fact in all Ages, till they had a stronger Light than that of the Heavens to direct them to the Author of them.

This

This he had learned from his Master *Socrates*, who always confessed he knew nothing of these high Points, and would not therefore venture to affirm any thing : And his not being able to determine wherein the final Good of Man consisted, caused that Division in his School, which afterwards rent it into so many Sects and Parties.

We have a great Example of Modesty and Judgment in the Case before us from *Simonides* : *Hiero* Tyrant of *Sicily* asked him what God was ? The Philosopher, a learned and wise Man in *Cicero's* Opinion, answered, that it was not a Question which could be immediately resolved, and demanded a Day to consider of it. *Hiero* then desired an Answer, but *Simonides* asked two Days more to think of it ; and as often as called upon, required double the time to give in his Answer. At which *Hiero* wondering, asked the Reason of such Delays : *Because*, says he, *the longer I consider it, the more obscure it appears to me.* *Cicero's* Remark upon this, is, *That neither could he produce any thing better ; for in all things, but especially those of Nature, maximè in physicks, it is easier to declare what is not, than what is.* And I believe, *Simonides* finding many subtle and curious Notions crowding upon his Mind, and doubting which of them was right, despaired of finding out the Truth.

Such were *Cicero's* Thoughts of the Arduousness of this Task ; and in other Places he copies his admired *Plato*. “ That it is difficult to find out the Author of Timæus. the Universe, or if found, impious to promulge him : “ That when we speak of the Nature of the Gods, or “ the Creation of the World ; if we cannot distinctly “ apprehend things, so that what we say should be clear “ or consistent, it is no wonder, we must be content “ with what is probable, remembering that we are but “ Men, and of such nothing more than Probability is “ required.” And adds, “ That if we can guess right “ at any Truth, we cannot have the least doubt in “ believing, that this World is a living Animal, en- “ dued with Understanding, &c.”

This wisest of Heathens apprehended no Clearness or Evidence from Reason or Nature in these Subjects ; no Intellectual Chain to raise the Mind ; for they could not make their Arguments, that were to prove them, consistent. All Knowledge herein was but Guess : And what he imagines to be the most evident Truth, was a foul idolatrous Error.

Nat. D. 1. In the Person of *Cotta* he gives the Opinion of  
3. n. 3. most Men. He believed the Gods on the Authority of his Forefathers, but could perceive no Strength of Argument to convince him of the Certainty thereof. All that Philosophy had invented, was produced ; but Debate darkned the Cause, and the many Arguments urged by *Balbus*, made him doubt of Points, which before he had never questioned.

Ibid. n. 4.

Such was the Language and Complaint of all the Philosophers, from a plain Discernment of their Inability to attain supernatural and divine Truths ; which cannot more fully be illustrated, than from the thorow Ignorance of their own Condition. Such Questions as these were the eternal Subject of Debate, but never settled. What or whence is Man ? to what Purposes was he made ? by whose Wisdom created ? what is his Business upon Earth ? or to what End does he undergo so many Trials and Afflictions ? did he receive Life from the natural Moisture of the Earth, as Mice or Worms ? or did he receive his Speech and Form from the Hands of some Contriver or Maker ?

Arnob. P. 27.

I need not mention here any of the learned primitive Christians, who are unanimous in this Opinion, that the human Intellect cannot apprehend divine and supernatural Truths, without the Assistance of a stronger Light than that of Nature or Reason.

How is all this consistent with the present Maxims in Theology ? That there is no Man whatsoever, who makes any Use of his Reason, but may easily become more certain of the Existence of God, than he can of any thing besides his own Existence. And

Dr Clarke  
Disc. 1. p.  
20.

Mr.



Mr. *Locke* tells us, “ That it is the most obvious P. 33, 373.  
 “ Truth which Reason discovers, and its Evidence  
 “ equal to mathematical Certainty.” To an instructed  
 Mind it is, but to an uninstructed one nothing,  
 as we have seen, more dark and uncertain ; as their  
 own Words confess also, and which destroy the very  
 Supposition. “ That this requires Thought and At- *Locke, Ib.*  
 “ tention, and the Mind must apply itself to a regu-  
 “ lar Deduction of it, from some Part of our intui-  
 “ tive Knowledge ; or else we shall be as uncertain  
 “ of this, as of other Propositions, which are in them-  
 “ selves capable of clear Demonstration.” That is,  
 they must do what no Man ever did, nor is possible  
 for Persons under those Circumstances to perform.

Which among the Nations of the Earth discharged  
 this easy Task ? When did the *Scythian* or the *Bri-  
 ton* so attentively apply themselves to so regular  
 Deductions from Intuitive Knowledge, as to disco-  
 ver a Deity, and form the Rules of Virtue from the  
 eternal Reason of things, into a rational well-con-  
 nected System ? If they did not, it is all Parade and  
 Boast of Words ; if they did, let the Reasoners and  
 their Arguments be produced to convince Gainsay-  
 ers, and all who so impiously derogate from the all-  
 sufficient Power of Nature and Reason, as to affirm  
 they have not Abilities even to enter upon the Sub-  
 ject ; and are so incredulous as not to believe those  
 Persons, who cannot account for one common Oc-  
 currence in Nature, can clearly unfold such things as  
 lie most remote from their Knowledge and Enquiry.  
 This is a Miracle that ought to be explained by those  
 who hold the affirmative Side of the Question ; the  
 Proofs of a Negative being only circumstantial, in  
 reducing the contrary Opinion to Absurdity or Im-  
 possibility ; and which, I hope, is not altogether  
 wanting in the Point under Consideration.

In Confirmation of this, I shall offer one other Ar-  
 gument, *viz.* That the Mind cannot have the same  
 Evidence in Divine things, that it has of Truth in

some other Sciences. And on this account, many of the Ancients either judged them uncertain, or rejected them, or took them wholly upon Trust, without enquiring what Degrees of Certainty they were capable of.

Ethic. l. 1  
c. 7.

That all things will not admit of the same full Demonstration, we have the Testimony of *Aristotle*, who relied as much on Reason, and as little on Faith, as any Modern. His Words are: “ We must remember that we are not to seek for the same Exactness in all things; but in every thing content ourselves with such a Method as the Subject will bear; neither must we in all things search after the Cause in the same manner; in some it may be sufficient to demonstrate that the thing is so, as in first Principles.”

And this is necessary in Divine things on several Accounts.

*First*, From the Will of God, who has propounded them to us only as Matters of Faith, or a submitting of Reason to what he declares concerning them, without being able to penetrate or comprehend them, which kind of Knowledge is reserved for a more perfect State.

*Secondly*, From the Nature of the Things exhibited to us, which are not subject to the same Investigation, as those which are more sensible and obvious. We cannot define them so as to limit their Natures in our Understanding, or remove all Obscurity in our Apprehensions of them; as we do not fully comprehend the Terms, so neither can we the Proposition which consists of them; we do not clearly discern their Causes or Dependences, therefore cannot form any Geometrical Method, to direct us in the Disquisition of their Truth.

*Thirdly*, We cannot (as has been shewn) trace the Cause from the Effects by reason of the vast and inconceivable Distance between Finite and Infinite,  
Crea-

Creation and Creator, which nothing but Omnipotence could unite.

Fourthly, There can be no Proof or Demonstration à priori, from any antecedent Cause: For *Principii nulla est origo: nam à principio oriuntur omnia, ipsum autem nulla alia ex re nasci potest, nec enim esset principium, quod gigneretur aliunde.* Here the learned Clemens of Alexandria teaches, “ That God is the most

Cic. Tusc.  
Q. 1. 1.

“ difficult of all to be discoursed of, because since  
“ the Principle of every thing is hard to be found  
“ out, the first and most ancient Principle of all,  
“ which was the Cause of all other Things, must  
“ needs be the hardest of all to be declared or mani-  
“ fested.” And afterwards adds, “ But neither  
“ can God be apprehended by any demonstrative  
“ Science, ἐπισήμη τῇ ἀποδεικτικῇ, for such Science  
“ is from Things before in order of Nature, and  
“ more knowable; whereas nothing can exist before  
“ that which is altogether unmade.” In all these  
Cases, we have an excellent Rule laid down by *Clemens Alexandrinus*. “ Let us not content ourselves with  
“ the Testimonies of Men; but let us confirm that  
“ which comes in Question by the Word of God,  
“ which is to be credited beyond all Demonstration;  
“ or rather is itself the only Demonstration.”

Strom. 5.  
p. 588.

Timæus.  
Clem.  
Alex.  
Strom. 7.

And I might here justly object against the pretended Perspicuity of supernatural Truths, that strange Dissent which has always been betwixt the Judgments of learned and even pious Men, concerning the Degrees of Validity in their Proofs, and whether they are conclusive or not; every one justifies his own Arguments as demonstrative, and makes Objections against others, which have raised Difficulties not admitting of an easy Solution, by the Maxims of Philosophy; what one has called demonstrative, has been confuted by another, as wanting all that Evidence, which can be the certain Character of Truth; or rejected as mere Sophism. Who more renowned than *Descartes*? He offers Demonstrations of the Exi-

stence of God, which at the *Sorbonne* have numberless Objections raised against them, and pronounced inconclusive. The want of this clear undoubted Evidence has occasioned in some a Suspension of Mind, and made a famous Schoolman (*Gabriel Biel*) who had waded through the Depths of Metaphysics, to declare, "That all the Proofs which Reason can afford of the Existence of God, are only probable." But this I only mention to shew, that even Demonstration appears in different Lights, and such are the Prejudices of the Mind, as not to discern the true Weight and Force of its own Arguments.

The Existence of a Deity is an unquestionable Truth, and so self-evident, that it cannot be proposed, but, the Instant the Mind hears and understands the Terms, it must assent to it as a most reasonable Belief; and when it has a moral Certainty (or the highest Evidence the Subject will admit of) that it is a Revelation from God, it will yield the fullest Assent, wherein there is no Doubt or Objection, that it is unquestionably true. If the Mind withholds its Assent, it is not for want of sufficient Light to convince it, but from being influenced and blinded with unnatural Passions and Lusts, and thereby becomes inexcusable: To this End, God propounds them as the Subject of Assent and Belief; but intends not a sensible or Mathematical Demonstration of them, because such Evidence of things not seen, would not be Faith, which is all he requires of us; and if none were to believe a God, till they could prove it Geometrically, Atheism would be the Natural Religion of the World, as it also would have been, if Revelation had not taught us the Being and Perfection of the Deity.

And from this sure Foundation, the Testimony of God, and that only, (not from the Wit, Invention, or Cogitations of Men) have all those noble Arguments been raised, to prove the necessary Self-existence of one supreme independent Cause; and which have been urged with such success against Error and Infidelity; that whoever did not acknowledge them

to be convincing, have been forced to retreat to the grossest Absurdities and Contradictions; no Way being left to defend their Assertions by Reason, but by admitting what Reason, as reasonable, can never consent to, which is most absurd; and they shut their Eyes under the glaring Light of Truth, that they might not see it, which is Falshood and a Lye.

Yet these Arguments, however conclusive, have not that immediate Evidence which is called Mathematical; if they had, every Mind tho' savage and uncultured would at once discern the Force of them, as perspicuously, as that two and two make four; whereas the Distance and Sublimity of the Subject, the Slowness of the Procedure, and the long Connexion of Truths with each other, require Study and Penetration, a clearer Discernment, and more solid Judgment, than are to be met with in the greater part of Mankind: Nor is it in our Power to make them sensible of the Relation of the several Propositions, how the Thread of Argumentation lies, or where the Certainty of the Evidence arises: They must be led by the Hand from Principle to Principle, and when all is done, the Reasons on which they believe, do not make them know it is impossible the thing should be otherwise.

Nor is this Obscurity owing to the Subject alone, but frequently to the Method of Deduction, and the Choice of Mediums, not always the most clear and exact, to fill up the great Space between an omnipotent Cause and a created Effect; which distant Extremes, Men according to their several Judgments and Apprehensions of things, bring together by intermediate Notions and Truths, formed into Syllogisms, so as to carry all along a moral Evidence and Certainty with them; For the Works of Creation are the Proof which God most frequently appeals to, and whereon those commonly used by Philosophers and Divines are grounded. That an infinite Succession of Causes is impossible and absurd; therefore there must be a First Cause, on which all are dependent; that  
all

all things which exist, cannot be contingent, therefore something must necessarily exist; that Matter cannot move itself, therefore there must be a First Mover; that in the several Beings which exist, there are several Degrees of Perfection, therefore there must be one supremely perfect, in Proportion to which other Beings are said to be more or less perfect; that all things have Operations for some End, and whatsoever worketh so, must be directed to it. Rational Creatures may apprehend the Goodness of such End, but other natural Agents cannot, therefore must be directed in their Actions by some other Counsel than their own; that even Men in natural Acts use no Deliberation, which nevertheless are directed to their proper Ends, therefore overruled and directed by a greater Wisdom than their own. And lastly, the Structure of the Universe, and Manner of its Subsistence in such an excellent Order in all its Parts, and with such amazing Regularity.

But all these Conclusions are drawn from two Propositions of God's own teaching; *I am*, or *I exist*; and *I made the Heavens and the Earth, and all things therein*: Whence the Inference to be proved, is, that he is God, the first supreme Cause, most perfect in his Nature, necessarily Self-existing, and that besides him, there is none else; all which are undoubted Truths, but the full Evidence of them does not lie in a Point, like Geometrical Demonstration, but takes in a greater Compass, is gradually obtained by Deduction and Consequence, leading the Mind from one Conclusion to another, till there is such a Degree of Certainty, that it is irrational or impossible to imagine it should be otherwise, and raises in the Mind a Sentiment and Conviction, against which Reason can make no Objection, and fixes an Impression on the Understanding, as clear as Light to the Eyes, and of any equal Degree of Certainty with any other kind of Evidence; and from Principles thus revealed to us by God, flow all the Delineations of spiritual Truths and natural  
Re-

Religion, which is founded on the divine Perfections; and of which without a Teacher from above, we had neither had Apprehension nor Proof.

It is not indeed yet agreed by the learned World, what Degree of Evidence these Proofs contain: Some have assured us of a demonstrative Mathematical Certainty, such as is in the Geometrical Sciences: But others with greater Caution and more Truth have rested it on a moral Certainty: So *Plato* defines σοφία, by which he generally understands divine Philosophy, to be an indemonstrable Science, Σοφία ἐπισήμη ἀνυπόθετος. Plato de. fin. Which depending upon the Clearness of those Mediums and Arguments, which are used to prove it according to the Degrees of Force and Perspicuity in such Proof, will be the Force and Evidence of moral Certainty. And in the Question before us, there is all the Proof that the Nature of the thing will admit, so as to exclude all manner of Doubt, put the Truth beyond Exception, and render the Disbelief of it absurd and almost impossible. For whoever will carefully attend to the Arguments used, will find this fundamental Truth so cogently offered, the Proofs of it so evident and incontestable, that though the Certainty be not scientifick or geometrical, yet is so unquestionable, that the Mind can no more withstand, or doubt of it, than it does of its own Existence, or Power of Reasoning.

And in this Proceeding God deals with us as with rational Creatures, in having given them Faculties to discern, and be convinced of the Truth of what he proposes; it is no Virtue to believe the Existence of sensible Objects; to believe a Mathematical Demonstration, is Knowledge or Science, not Faith: But a firm Assent to the reality of Things invisible: To give them a Subsistence in our Minds, a Substance to what is only hoped for, a real Being to what is no way the Object of Sense, is that spiritual Evidence and sincere Faith, which God demands

Heb. x.  
39.

demands and accepts of all them, *who believe to the saving of the Soul.* And such a Reliance on the Divine Testimony, an Assent wrought by the Spirit of God, is as certain, as strong and efficacious a Conviction of the Mind, and leaves as little room for Doubt, as the Mathematical or Ocular Demonstration.

It is besides no small Disadvantage to Religion or Morality, to pretend that they are capable of a Certainty, which the Nature of them will not admit; it is only weakening the Cause to produce in its behalf Arguments which cannot be supported, and omit the highest Evidence it is capable of: For as a learned Prelate argues, if there were any one demonstrative Argument, or Mathematical Certainty, for the Existence of a Deity; this would render all other Arguments from Scripture or Reason entirely needless; and there could not be such a thing as a speculative Atheist in the World; whereas the Experience of all Ages hath shewn, that there are many such Fools, otherwise of great Learning and Natural Sagacity, who have said in their Hearts, and argued that *there is no God.* Nay every one would have a determinate scientifick Knowledge of it; there could be no Variety of Opinions in the World, nor any such thing as Idolatry, to worship a false God, or more than one.

*Secondly,* It is of a most pernicious Consequence; for if these Doctrines be capable of demonstrative Proof, nothing need be regarded further than as it is made appear to have such Evidence: And Libertines and Unbelievers will never fail to demand it, though it is what the very Nature of them will not admit, and therefore an impossible Task to do.

*Thirdly,* If mere Morality (as called) is strictly demonstrable, and Revelation capable of no more than Moral Evidence, then the last can never be on an equal foot of Certainty with it, though wholly



ly dependent on it: A Consequence those who are evilly inclined to Revelation plainly see, and accordingly insist on Mathematical Certainty and Evidence in Religion: And from thence it is that modern Metaphysical Morality is grown into Fashion, and that our Writers on that Subject have unwarily formed their Discourses to the prevailing Taste and Genius of an unbelieving Age; though nothing is further from the Nature of Mathematical Certainty, than Metaphysical Abstractions; and Mankind would be in a desperate Condition, if they were to depend upon such Abstractions, for the fundamental Point of all Religion, and were to be conducted through an intricate Maze of notional Abstractions, before they could arrive at this Conclusion; *therefore there is a God.*

But the Procedure in Moral Certainty is by a long and imperceptible Series of Reasoning, the Deductions which the Intellect makes are purely rational; all its Resolutions and Conclusions are entirely abstracted from any immediate Act of Sensation; its Reasonings are all about Notions and Conceptions, not only very complex in themselves, each of them being a Composition of many Ingredients, but wonderfully varied according to the different Sentiments of Men and their opposite Ways of thinking; which makes the Guidance of the Mind, and the coming at Knowledge this way slow and embarrassing; these Operations are what few are capable to judge of, much less perform; what then shall the Millions of rational Creatures do to direct themselves to their final End? If amidst a Variety of Conclusions they do not always single out the right, if they introduce but one wrong Medium, if they mistake in apprehending the Premises or drawing the Inferences, instead of Evidence and Truth they will have Confusion and Error. All this is impossible, a flat Contradiction to the known and common Abilities

ties of Nature; and had God required it of them, he would have given them suitable Faculties and Operations to direct them, and attain their End.

Clarke,  
Serm. 80.  
Vol. 1.

It is indeed pretended that Revelation comes in by the by, only as an Aid to Nature; and that a well attested Interposition of Divine Authority becomes unto all Men a just Ground of Assent to those Truths, which to make out by the help of Reason only, was a Work of Difficulty, Time, and Study; therefore not necessary, but might have been omitted, as the Intent of it was only to save us a little Time and Labour. A very gracious Account of the Divine Will and Goodness! But if Reason was the only Help intended to come at supernatural Truths; why did he who directs all things by unerring Wisdom and unconfined Mercy, make it a Work of such Difficulty for Man to know his chiefest Good? Could he not have given him superior Faculties, with the same Ease that he gave the present? Or rather, is the not having given him Abilities sufficient for that Purpose, the Reason why God made his Revelation; that being the Purpose of his Will, whereby Man was to come at the Knowledge of all things necessary to his End, and thereby exercise his Faith, to which so many Promises are made?

Ib.

And that he never could have known them without Revelation, I think plainly appears from the ablest Defenders of Natural Religion; that though all the great Truths of it, the Being and Attributes of God, the Unalterableness of Moral Obligations, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Expectation of future Rewards and Punishments, are discoverable by Reason and Argumentation; yet the greatest Philosophers were in continual Disputes, and in many Degrees of Uncertainty concerning the very fundamental and most important Doctrines of Truth and Reason; and the quibbling and vain Methods of disputing among the greater

Part

Part of the Heathen Philosophers, were only Shadows of Reasoning falsely so called.

Is not this an express Contrariety, that all great Truths are discoverable by Reason, yet the most improved Reasoners could never discover or fix the very fundamental Doctrines of Reason and Truth; neither was it possible for them to do it, since their best Method of Argumentation was quibbling, vain, and only the Shadow of Reasoning. Are not such Retreats as these a giving up the Cause, and more than a moral Proof, that all they say on this Head is only systematical, not real, or natural?

For Reason to have a Law, and Nature a Religion, which neither Reason nor Nature can find out the fundamental Truths of, is absurd and monstrous: Law must be perspicuous, or it has no Right to Obedience; and the End of Religion must be open to the Understanding, or it is impossible to discern or pursue it: It is therefore neither Law nor Religion, if a virtuous honest Mind, after due Application, cannot see the Precepts and Obligations of them. If there be but one Exemption, the Rule is not general; if there be Millions, it is no Rule at all: Yet the *Nomades*, and *New-Holland* Men, have the same Nature, the same Rights, and the same End with other Nations; therefore under the same Obligations, and if so, must have Power to know and fulfil them; but this they neither did, nor have Power to do, and as Impossibilities cannot oblige, it is neither the Law nor Religion of Nature, because not Universal as the Nature: I need not instance in these, because (as we have seen) *Athens* and *Rome* were Strangers to the very Foundations of them.

To talk therefore of Revelation as a Crutch, to save Difficulty, Time, or Study, is an empty, lazy Sophism: How comes it to pass, that the greatest Men, who consumed their whole Time and Study herein, did not accomplish it? Or if Nature can  
do

do it, why so much Learning and Application? To all natural Acts they are superfluous; and what cannot be had but by them, is owing to them, not to Nature: But alas! neither Study nor Nature were sufficient for it: For (as the same Author observes) those ancient Sages who were so impatient after Wisdom, as to exhaust their Lives and Spirits in pursuit of it, were ever lost in Uncertainties about the most fundamental Doctrines: They had Truth in few, Mistakes in many, Doubts in all important Points; so that Revelation could not be intended to save Time and Study, as they served to so little purpose. And as they had Doubts, Mistakes, and but the Shadow of Truth in any important Point, it is an Abuse of the common Sense of Mankind, to pretend that Nature or Reason could come at the Truth of one supernatural Doctrine, the spiritual Nature and Perfections of God, the Immortality of the Soul, a future State, the Origin of the Universe, &c.

This intellectual Pride, or sole Reliance upon Reason, has given us in later Ages lamentable Instances of human Frailty, by the fall of wise Men into desperate Errors; from imagining there was no Difficulty they were not able to account for, and taking no other Clue to direct them, they utterly departed from Truth, and adopted the most heretical and detestable Opinions.

This *Simplicius* observes of *Aristotle*, that confining himself to the Sphere of his own Reason, he would examine divine Matters by Nature, and admit nothing but what was grounded on Nature's Light, or rather his own corrupt Reason. Whence he rejected the divine Doctrines his Master learned from the Eastern Traditions, because they would not stoop to his proud Reason and Method of Argumentation. This made the *Leviathan* of the last Century publicly profess Atheism, and a Disbelief of all things which admit not of sensible Demonstration.

And

And the same Fate must attend all those Reasoners of Nature, whose stubborn Minds will not submit to Revelation, because not evident in the same manner as a Problem in *Euclid*, but will have Demonstration and Mathematical Certainty for every thing, tho' from the Nature of the Subject it be incapable of it. Though surely it is not the Character of Wisdom to demand an Impossibility; or for Reason, because it cannot master Truth, to believe an Absurdity; but this is copying after the Ancients, who, because they could not prove the Creation, were satisfied to maintain the Eternity of Matter.

Nay amongst the most Orthodox, is there any one System of speculative Points, in the Proofs whereof all agree? some things may be true, but are founded on such remote Principles and Consequences, that they cannot with Certainty be depended on. An Argument is said to be conclusive here, but seems weak or fallacious there: The Principle is good, but the Conclusion not indubitable. This might have been put in a stronger Light, and that with more Prudence and Caution omitted; there is some Error or Defect in them all, which other learned Men dissent from; and where there is one Defect, there may be more; so that in a System, the Product of mere Reason, every Man must go through the whole Operation to settle his Judgment, which the Bulk of Mankind are unable to do; or depend upon that of others which is fallible, therefore no sure Reliance on it in Matters of Salvation.

To remedy which, God who is infallible, has made such Revelations of himself in his Word, and by his Works, as are necessary and sufficient for our present State; and perhaps as far as the Proportion betwixt the Object to be known and the Faculty to apprehend will bear; by which we are able to ascend to a sufficient Knowledge of him, and if more

had been requisite to conduct our Contemplations, or direct our Lives, he would not have denied the Means of attaining it : To inquire further than this, will be no more than Vanity and Presumption, in which Men are quickly confounded; and many have lost their Religion and Devotion too, by thus curiously prying into the Mysteries and Secrets of God. No one need be ashamed of not knowing what God has not revealed; and he that would go further, gives up his Wisdom, and endangers his Safety : The only sure Rule is, to leave off inquiring where God leaves off to teach us; for there are Bounds set to human Understanding and Curiosity; there is a Danger in wantonly pressing beyond them; and it is real Wisdom to desire Ignorance of what God would not have us know.

This same Procedure will hold true of all other divine Subjects; I shall mention but one, and that is the Immortality of the Soul, concerning which let us hear Mr. *Locke* in his Reply to the Bishop of *Worcester*. “ Your Accusation of my lessening the  
 Answer to “ Credibility of these Articles of Faith, is founded  
 Second “ on this, That the Article of the Immortality of  
 Letter. “ the Soul abates of its Credibility, if it be allowed,  
 “ that its Immateriality (which is the supposed  
 “ Proof from Reason and Philosophy of its Immor-  
 “ tality) cannot be demonstrated from Natural Rea-  
 “ son; which Argument of your Lordship’s bot-  
 “ toms, as I humbly conceive, on this, That Di-  
 “ vine Revelation abates of its Credibility in all those  
 “ Articles it proposes, proportionably as human  
 “ Reason fails to support the Testimony of God.  
 “ And all that your Lordship in those Passages has  
 “ said, when examined, will, I suppose, be found to  
 “ import thus much, *viz.* Does God propose any  
 “ thing to Mankind to be believed? It is very fit  
 “ and credible to be believed, if Reason can  
 “ demonstrate it to be true : But if human Reason  
 “ comes short in the Case, and cannot make it out,  
 “ its

“ its Credibility is thereby lessened ; which is in ef-  
“ fect to say, That the Veracity of God is not a  
“ firm and sure Foundation of Faith to rely upon,  
“ without the concurrent Testimony of Reason,  
“ *i. e.* with Reverence be it spoken, God is not to be  
“ believed on his own Word, unless what he reveals  
“ be in it self credible, and might be believed with-  
“ out him. Your Lordship says, You do not Que-  
“ stion whether God can give Immortality to a  
“ material Substance ; but you say it takes off very  
“ much from the Evidence of Immortality, if it  
“ depends wholly upon God’s giving that which of  
“ its own Nature it is not capable of. To which  
“ I reply ; Any one’s not being able to demonstrate  
“ the Soul to be immaterial, takes off not very  
“ much, nor at all from the Evidence of its Im-  
“ mortality, if God has revealed that it shall be  
“ immortal, because the Veracity of God is a Demon-  
“ stration of the Truth of what he has revealed, and  
“ the want of another Demonstration of a Propositi-  
“ on, that is demonstratively true, takes not off from  
“ the Evidence of it. For where there is a clear De-  
“ monstration, there is as much Evidence as any Truth  
“ can have that is not self-evident. Can any one who  
“ admits of Divine Revelation, think this Proposition  
“ less credible, The Bodies of Men after the Refur-  
“ rection, shall live for ever ; than this, The Souls of  
“ Men shall, after the Resurrection, live for ever ?  
“ For that he must do, if he think either of them is  
“ less credible than the other. If this be so, Reason  
“ is to be consulted how far God is to be believed,  
“ and the Credit of the Divine Testimony must re-  
“ ceive its Force from the Evidence of Reason, which  
“ is evidently to take away the Credibility of Divine  
“ Revelation, in all supernatural Truths, wherein  
“ the Evidence of Reason fails.”

Thus far Mr. *Locke*, that great Master of Reason.  
Nothing need be added to it. The World is con-  
vinced how much he triumphed over his learned Ad-

versary in this Dispute. Reason has its Province, and a very large one, but is not the Measure of supernatural Truths. We are Christians by Faith, not by Natural Reason, and must therefore believe, not in ourselves but in God, in those things which Religion, and not Reason teaches. The Result of *Cajetan's* long Enquiry into this Subject, was to embrace the Opinion he once had scoffed at, and make this Confession, "I believe that our Souls are immortal, " but I do not know it," *i. e.* He found no Demonstrations from Natural Reason, that were conclusive and convincing. No Foundation is so immoveable as the Word of God; no Demonstration so clear as the Divine Authority; no Truth so evident as what God affirms; nor is it Natural Reason, or Philosophical Notions, but Faith, which will make us acceptable to him.

If after all it be said that the Heathens did come at the Knowledge of God, a religious Behaviour towards him, the Immortality of the Soul, &c. and that by the Light of Nature and unassisted Reason only, without any Help or Instruction but their own Ratiocinations, by Observation, Collection, and Inference from sensible Objects; a Point that many are willing to believe and to persuade others.

I might as justly answer, That they never did come to any tolerably adequate Conceptions of the Supreme Being, much less of his Will, or that Worship which must be due to him; nor of the Immortality of the Soul, or a future State: That it is almost impossible to recount the many impious and false Opinions they conceived of the Deity; what Vanities, absurd and ridiculous things they looked upon as God, and with what barbarous accursed Rites they offered their Worship to him.

But these Points shall have a full Examination in the ensuing Parts of this Treatise: What their Notions and Doctrines were in Theology; what their solemn Acts of Worship and Piety; what their Practices



tices or Morality ; and how far their so much boasted Philosophy conduced to the Knowledge of these important Truths, or to the final Good and End of Man : That we may the better judge how far Nature and Reason are sufficient for these things ; for if they did not direct the Heathens, neither can they others ; and if the former knew not God, nor worshipped him as God, all the shining Scraps and Quotations cited from them, will be no more than empty big swelling Words, without any Truth or Meaning.

Reason and Nature are the same in Heathens and Christians ; its Faculties and Operations equal, and one cannot, by the Exercise of it, do more than the others did. If then the Religion and Law of Nature be unalterable and eternal, they must have been under all the moral Obligations, that we now are ; and if the Precepts of Natural Religion and Law be perspicuous, clear and obvious to Reason, they must have been universally and equally known, (especially to their wise Men) in the ancient as well as present Ages. But if this be false in fact, if no one did it, if among all the Writings of the Heathen World, (notwithstanding so many glittering Sentences, and almost divine Discourses) there cannot be extracted any tolerably explicit System of God, his Providence, Attributes and Will, the Immortality of the Soul, or a future State ; but in every important Point there were horrid Defects, and monstrous Errors ; no Agreement or Certainty amongst them, some affirming, some denying, others doubting ; in all Places shocking and impious Principles, together with the vilest Practices, allowed and tolerated, contrary both to Nature and Reason :

The Conclusion must be, That natural Light was insufficient to Divine Knowledge ; and that their having any Notions or Apprehensions of spiritual things, must be derived from some other Fountain ; except we are content to say, that Shadows and Substances are the same thing, or that Reason could discern

cern the one but not the other, altho' given us for such purpose; from which Opinion little Advantage would redound to Man, or Honour to God.

We have seen it to be the concurring Judgment of the whole World, Heathens, Jews, and Christians, that we cannot know the First Cause by its Effects, because of the vast Distance between it and the most exalted Mind; so that one must always be infinitely removed from the other, nor by any Analogy from visible things. The Philosophers compar'd him to the Sun, as the most glorious Object of Sense; but the Similitude could only cast a Shade upon him. *Plotinus* says, *We have no Knowledge or Understanding of him.* *Parmenides* and *Dionysius*, *That we speak of him only by Negatives and Relations.* *Cassiodore* says, *That the highest Point of Wisdom is to know, that God can do more than human Sense can conceive.* And it is an Expression of their own, *That our Understanding with regard to God, is as the Eyes of an Owl to the Brightness of the Sun.* So it was universally agreed to the Days of *Iamblichus*, in the last Ages of Philosophy, *That Human Nature can neither reason, nor speak of God, nor perform any Divine Works without God.*

There remains then no other way to come at the Knowledge of the First Cause, but by its own Manifestations; what Nature could not do, Grace and Mercy have supplied. Nothing (without a Miracle) can ascend to Heaven, but what first came down from thence: And in this Method do we attain the Knowledge of the Celestial Hierarchy. The Divine Light descended on the Angelick Nature, and afterwards by Revelation, Inspiration, and Instruction, manifests and imparts itself to our Capacities and Understanding; and the Human Mind must ascend by the same Scale to the Contemplation of spiritual invisible Objects: For by a due Meditation on what has been revealed from above, reverently examining, weighing and considering the Secrets of Heaven, and  
that

that Illumination of the Divine Splendour which is in Angels, she gradually increases in the Knowledge of supernatural things, till at last she grows stronger, and is able to raise herself up to a distant Contemplation (all that her Faculties can admit) of the Glories which encompass the Supreme Infinite. For the Notices here are proportioned to our State; but Reason is weak, and the Natural Man not capable of the things of the Spirit, because *they are spiritually discerned*. In these, Faith is the Eye, and the Spirit and Word of God the Light which dispels the Darkness of the Mind, opens to it a new Scene of Invisibles, the Creator of all things, glorious but immaterial Substances, infinite Wisdom, Perfection and Beatitudes, which a Finite Intellect could never have enquired into or discovered.

And when the First Cause has thus manifested it self, the Works become proper Witnesses to what the Word has revealed concerning its Greatness and Perfection; Then natural Means become Illustrations of the supernatural ones, and visible things an Evidence of Intellectuals. The Grandeur, Excellence, and Order of the Universe, are a sensible Proof, and unquestionable Demonstration of its being the Effect of infinite Power and Wisdom, and thus the Heavens declare the Glories of the invisible Godhead: For (with *Euripides*) ἀστῆρες δ' ἐν ἕρανῶ ποικίλμα τέκτονος σοφῆς, *The Stars in Heaven are the Variety of a wise Artificer*.

On the whole, we may safely conclude, as *Plato* did, from the concurrent Opinions of all Ages and Places, <sup>Epinom. p. 988.</sup>  
 “ That there is the greatest and most evident Reason  
 “ to believe, whenever Men began to speculate about  
 “ the Gods, whether there were any such Beings, how  
 “ they existed, and what were their Employments;  
 “ That none of these Opinions took their Rise from  
 “ the Wit or Reason of wise Men.” That is, not from Nature or Reason, which is the Point contended for, and at first proposed to be enquired into.

If the farther Pursuit of this Subject may (in the Opinion of wise impartial Men) contribute any Service to Religion, I shall proceed to confirm what has been hitherto said from Fact and Experience; the only Arguments which can give true light to, or be conclusive, in the Enquiry before us: And endeavour to shew in the

*Second Book,* That the best Notions the Heathens were able to conceive of God and supernatural Truths, such as the Immortality of the Soul, a future State, &c. were vastly imperfect, or altogether false; that their most solemn Acts of Worship were idolatrous, superstitious, and utterly unbecoming the Divine Nature; and their Moral Actions, which they held to be just and good, were impious, wicked and detestable: From whence it will follow in the

*Third Book,* That Philosophy or Reason are wholly insufficient to prescribe a Law of Acting or a Rule of Life to Man, or direct him to the Perfection of his Being, his final End, and ultimate Happiness. And to complete the Subject, I shall, in the

*Fourth Book,* Trace out the only Method whereby the Heathen World did come at the Names and Notices of Divine Truths, which we find among them.

And every Argument through the whole will tend to confirm this single Point, *That the Knowledge of Divine Things cannot be attained by Reason or Nature.*

F I N I S.



